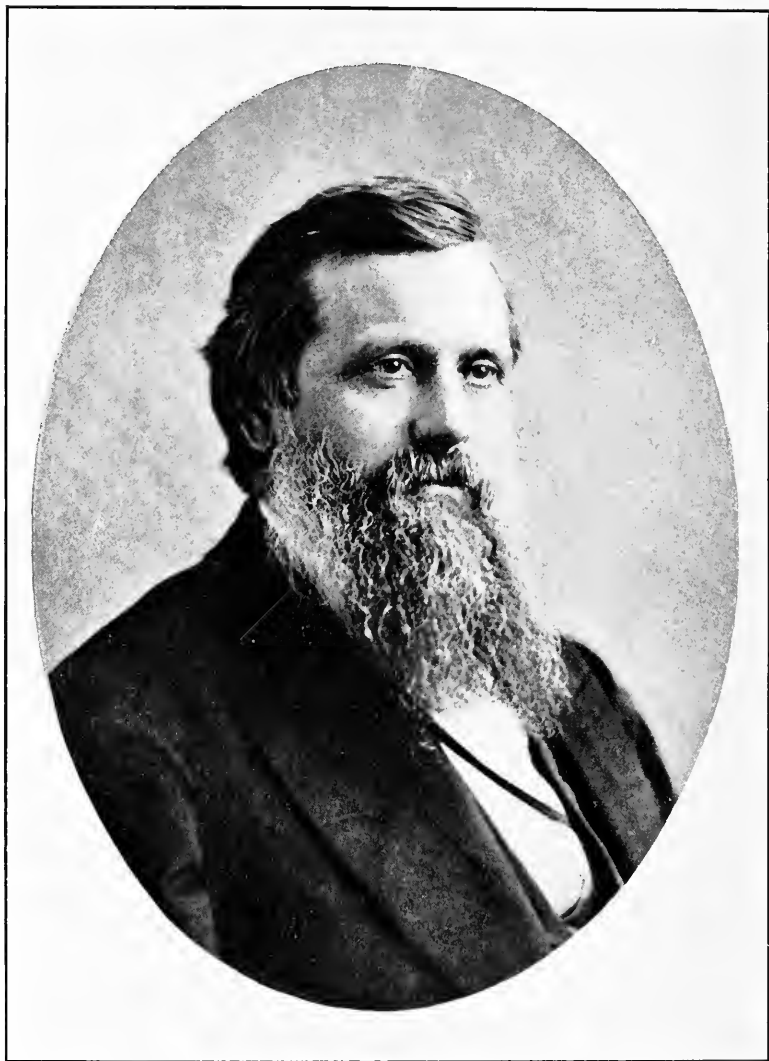




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GRANT, LINCOLN, AND THE FREEDMEN



JOHN EATON.

From a photograph taken about 1870.

GRANT, LINCOLN AND THE FREEDMEN

Reminiscences of the Civil War

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

THE WORK FOR THE CONTRABANDS AND FREEDMEN
OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

BY

JOHN EATON, PH.D., LL.D.

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Bureau ; Commissioner of Education of the United States ;
U. S. Superintendent of Schools, Porto Rico*

IN COLLABORATION WITH

ETHEL OSGOOD MASON

WITH PORTRAIT AND FACSIMILES

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

91 AND 93 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

LONDON, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1907

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P R E F A C E

IN preparing this volume of reminiscences for publication I have found myself led by two motives more or less related.

My wish in the first place is to give a faithful picture of the great President and the great General who guided us through the most tragic period of our National life. I do not pretend to write in any general sense of the military career of Grant or the political life of Lincoln, but only of those incidents in connection with which I came into personal contact with these two men, and, above all, of the character and standards of each as I saw them. One of the strongest safeguards to American life is devotion to our heroes and reverence for the ideals to which they pledged themselves. Grant and Lincoln were pre-eminent among those who sacrificed the personal to the National life, and we can never look too closely to the examples which they prepared for us.

My second wish was to preserve, in a form available to the general reader, a record of the efforts made by the Union army to succor the Negro during the progress of the war and to secure justice to him and to the communities in which he found himself. Here, again, no attempt has been made to give a history of this work in any adequate or general sense. Although I have the keenest recognition of the labors of other men who were detailed to special service among the contrabands and freedmen, I have been obliged to refer only sparingly to their efforts. I have confined myself to presenting as faithfully as I might a record

of the work for the Negro in the Mississippi Valley, where I acted as Superintendent of Freedmen for the Department of the Tennessee and State of Arkansas, under the direct authority of General Grant—and later of the War Department—and in more or less close personal touch with President Lincoln. The superintendency established by the Union over the welfare of the Negro during the height of the conflict was one of the most important efforts made by our Government to meet the threatening race problem which was then presented unequivocally to the Nation, and which is still one of the great issues our country has to face. Under that supervision the Negro's status changed from that of slave to freeman, and the record of the transformation should at least be available to all who have an interest in the Negro question as it confronts us to-day. Unfortunately no one of the superintendents intrusted with this work before the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau has given us any history of it save what may be drawn from the somewhat inaccessible official reports. Hence the literature of the subject is inadequate. Yet the Negro can never be understood or our relation to him determined until all the elements in his history are recognized. It is in the hope, then, of preserving data which are in danger of being wholly overlooked that these personal recollections are offered.

In the preparation of this volume I have had the collaboration of Miss Ethel Osgood Mason, daughter of my college classmate and life-long friend Dr. Osgood Mason. Such readable quality as the narrative may possess is in no small measure due to her literary instinct joined with a fidelity in research that has assured the accuracy of all documentary and special references.

JOHN EATON.

39 HIGHLAND ST.,
ROXBURY, MASS., September 20, 1904.

MY DEAR GENERAL EATON :

I hear with great pleasure that you have joined the ranks of those of us who in our mature lives are willing to print some recollections of the two generations which we remember. I have had great personal pleasure in recalling some of mine and putting them upon paper, and I begin to think that every such effort conscientiously made forms a particular improvement in the preservation of the history of our time. The truth is that such memoirs give a sort of reality and life to history which the written documents of the day for a thousand reasons cannot give.

No man now living was in a position more fortunate than you for knowing what was really going on, nor is any man of our time competent to write down some things of the very first importance as you can record them. I have said a hundred times in public that Grant never showed his knowledge of men more distinctly than when he chose you for the important duty which you assumed in the West under his direction. And any one of us who knew anything about your work in the years which followed, and in the enterprise, indeed, which began with you and him, will be glad to know that there is to be a permanent record of them.

Do not hesitate to put into the book matters which in themselves may be considered slight or of little importance which all the same may illustrate the character and habit of life of those great men with whom you were in such close personal connection.

Nothing could have given our dear friend Hoar greater pleasure than to have read your book and in whatever public way to testify his respect for the work which you began. I think you may say to any one that you had his entire sympathy in the difficult periods of your work, and that he was well pleased, indeed, at your success.¹

Always truly yours, dear General Eaton,

EDWARD E. HALE.

¹ A word of introduction to this book was to have been written by Senator George Frisbie Hoar, but the fatal illness which saddened all his friends prevented Senator Hoar from fulfilling his promise. The indulgent letter from Dr. Hale is substituted in preference to any formal introduction.



JOHN EATON

*A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH*¹

ETHEL OSGOOD MASON

THE writer of these memoirs expressed in his preface the double aim he pursued in their preparation. In accordance with that aim the story of General Eaton's life is almost ignored in his own recital, save where it meets the lives of the two men and the affairs of that race indicated in the title of the volume. This omission in the content of the book explains why it has been found advisable to attach a biographical note to a record autobiographical in form. Furthermore, this record of his career assumes, perhaps, greater fittingness now that the last word of the narrative has been set down. General Eaton lived little more than long enough to complete his book, and on the 9th of February, 1906, his life closed in dignity and peace.

The exact conditions of General Eaton's early surroundings would now be difficult to parallel. While his

¹ Grateful acknowledgment is made of the help given by many friends and associates of General Eaton's in the preparation of this biographical note. Special acknowledgments are due to the Hon. W. T. Harris, ex-Commissioner of Education of the United States, — not only for valuable suggestions, but for helpful revision of portions of the text, — and also to Dr. Sheldon Jackson, the late Dr. A. D. Mayo, and Dr. Victor S. Clark, formerly of Porto Rico.

development in boyhood was without doubt unconsciously stimulated by the social and educational traditions of New England, it was at the same time thwarted by obstacles which are seldom to be faced to-day, — at least in our older communities.

John Eaton, born December 5, 1829, was the oldest of a family of nine children, of whom six were boys. One daughter died in infancy. The father, John Eaton, was reckoned a very prosperous man in those parts, and the two thousand acres or more of his farm in the township of Sutton, Merrimack County, New Hampshire, provided for his large family and yielded produce of all sorts to the neighboring market towns. But if the farm supported the Eaton household it exacted full toll of hard labor and undivided fealty, — a claim which the father of the family sternly enforced. Recreation and merry-making found little place in the scheme of life he expected his children to abide by; nor did education fare much better. John began school when little more than three years old, and for a year or two attended during the spring and early summer months, but in his fifth year he was deemed old enough to ride the horse at the plough, and after that the farm claimed him, save in the brief midwinter season when work was slack. Then it became a duty religiously observed by the elder brother to lead the little flock daily to and from the schoolhouse.

It was through his mother that ambition in the larger sense of the word entered the boy's life. It was she who urged him to walk eight miles for a book on those merciful Sabbaths when labor was taboo. It was from her, too, that he derived the conception of duty to be fulfilled through

love which in later years became the motive of his life. The mother died in February, 1846, when John was but just turned seventeen, and he and the sister next him in age seem at once to have been filled with the thought of supplying their mother's place to the younger brothers and sister. But during every spare moment John took to his books, struggling against heavy odds to educate himself. In his reading he had come across a geography of the heavens, and stirred by the wonder of the sky at night he would creep out of his window, and lying on the roof below, trace out the pattern of the stars. Unluckily his father, brought out of doors one night by some disturbance among the cattle in his barns, caught sight of the young star-gazer and promptly put an end to that diversion. The elements of Latin and chemistry were mastered at night after John was a-bed and presumably sleeping. On one all but fatal occasion sleep did indeed overtake him, and the lamp upset. Small wonder; it had been standing on his chest the better to light his book. Fortunately, however, the flames were extinguished by the culprit before they had damaged anything save the bed-clothes, and all that was left of these the faithful sister, pledged to secrecy, discreetly burned next morning in the kitchen stove. So the nocturnal studies continued unmolested.

By the time John was sixteen he had equipped himself sufficiently to teach one term in an adjoining district. Some of the scholars there were older than himself. But the struggle he was making had its reward at last. John Eaton, senior, agreed to send his oldest son to Thetford Academy, Vermont, and promised to do the same for all

his boys in turn. At Thetford, Dr. Hiram Orcutt encouraged John to go to college, and by dint of working on the home farm, or shearing sheep for the neighbors in the summer months and teaching in the winter, the four years at Dartmouth were secured.

Upon his graduation in 1854, Eaton at once became principal of the Ward School in Cleveland, Ohio. Among his pupils there was William Rockefeller,—a barefooted youngster whose future career could scarcely have been prognosticated then.

In 1856, when only twenty-seven years old, he was called to Toledo, Ohio, where he became superintendent of city schools. In this capacity he strove especially to secure greater thoroughness in scholarship and a more exact classification in the instruction given. He also introduced physical training as a branch of the work at a time when it was practically unknown in the public schools. Already his remarkable executive and organizing ability was becoming manifest. Here in his first position of real authority he began to work out the sociological problems of public instruction through the collection and analysis of statistics, and these he made a special effort to have reliable and complete.

During the Toledo period the young superintendent was preparing himself by private study for the ministry. The terrible curse of depression and religious doubt which seems to fall especially to the lot of the New Englander had fastened upon him just after his mother's death in 1846, but he emerged from the experience strong in the traditional faith of his fathers and determined formally to devote himself to the ministry of God. He resigned the

school superintendency and entered Andover Theological Seminary in 1859 as a licentiate. In this connection it should be stated at once that although the responsibilities which General Eaton was later obliged to assume detached him from the active pursuit of his chosen profession, he never lost touch with it, but on the contrary was frequently associated with the affairs of the church. In later years, in the midst of many other duties, he was called to preside as moderator of the Presbytery of Athens and of the Synod of Ohio. The religious element in his make-up was a strong factor in all his work. It has been said of him that he was filled with the true missionary spirit,—in that sense of the word which stands for the devotion of life and property to the highest good.

In the summer of 1861, after ordination, Eaton prepared to take his share in the National conflict then maturing, and became chaplain of the 27th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. With this regiment he went through the interesting and exciting episodes of the campaign in Missouri at a time when State and civic complications and the incapacity of our leaders had involved the Union cause in the West in difficulties from which Grant himself was destined later to release it.

Before the close of 1862 Eaton's devotion and zeal had twice drawn him within the Confederate lines. The 27th Ohio having been ordered to the support of Mulligan at Lexington, the Chaplain—after conducting the sick and wounded to St. Louis—was endeavoring to overtake his regiment, which he supposed had opened the way before him, when about ten miles north of Lexington he fell into the hands of a detachment of Price's "Blackberry

Cavalry." The Union troops, finding themselves too weak to engage the Confederates, had turned off toward Leavenworth, leaving the rebels in possession of the surrounding country. Eaton was therefore a prisoner in Price's lines when Colonel Mulligan and his brave little band surrendered, and until taken in hand by one of General Price's lieutenants, who treated him with every courtesy, he was exposed to the violence of the soldiers whose tempers had been somewhat overtaxed by Mulligan's resistance. During the week or more of his detention the Chaplain came unavoidably into possession of much general knowledge of conditions among the Confederates. Mulligan's officers, indeed, reported shortly afterward to Frémont, at his headquarters near Jefferson City, that although their lips were sealed by their parole, Chaplain Eaton, whose release was unconditional, was free to disclose much valuable information. Accordingly he had two interviews with General Frémont, and these sadly disillusioned him. The General proved a very genial companion, but it was Mrs. Frémont who extracted from the Chaplain what he had to tell.

Chaplain Eaton soon accompanied the command to Springfield, Missouri, where he rejoined his regiment. When the Union troops left the city under command of General Hunter, who had then replaced General Frémont, Eaton, in spite of his recent experience as a prisoner, volunteered to stay behind and care for his friend, Colonel, afterwards General, Fuller of the 27th Ohio, who was down with typhoid fever and too ill to move with his men. Small detachments of Confederate horse entered the town as soon as the Union forces left it, and both the Colonel and his Chaplain were threatened by an irate cavalry

officer with arrest and detention. General McCulloch on his arrival put an end to such episodes by stating that he had not entered the service to fight sick men and chaplains. The relation between the Confederate officers and the two Union men became very pleasant, so much so that Chaplain Eaton enjoyed the somewhat unique experience of preaching to the Confederate soldiers at the request of their commanders. As soon as Colonel Fuller was able to travel, he and the Chaplain made a difficult journey to St. Louis, reporting there to General Halleck; but Halleck's indifference was as disconcerting as Frémont's had been, and his sternness was a poor exchange for the geniality of his predecessor.

Of neither of these disappointing experiences, however, did Chaplain Eaton speak at the time. He was writing frequent letters for publication in the home papers, and he carefully refrained from any allusion to his personal disappointment in the leaders of our Western forces. Instead he took pains to correct some of the unjust criticisms current in regard to Frémont, and referred with much discretion to what had been in reality an unpleasant interview with Halleck. He felt too keenly the havoc wrought by "all partisan and fanatical movements in the North" to add an iota to such influences.

These newspaper letters, by the way, are fair evidence of the peculiar tolerance and sagacity of Chaplain Eaton's mind. He has of course sharp words for the rebels, as any man of strong Union feeling must have had when writing in the heat of the conflict, but his condemnation of political trickery and selfishness included Unionists as well. "A pro-slavery fanatic in Missouri," he writes

(October, 1861), "is twin brother to an antislavery fanatic in Ohio." And commenting early in February of the same year on the difficulty of really ascertaining or understanding what was happening at distant points, he says: "The North sees a misrepresented South, and the South a caricature of the North. Neither portion of the country would recognize its portrait as it appears to the other." Few men in those days saw so clearly as he the part that ambitious political intriguers and fanatics were taking in the impending conflict, and in support of his position he quotes from a private letter — written by a friend of Mr. Choate's — a description of the terrible excitement in the Gulf States: "The demagogue politicians whose maxim is 'rule or ruin' are busy exciting the passions of the people. . . . The loudest . . . for the rights of the South, are the vagrant, broken-down politicians who have not and never will have a slave to their names. They go about and alarm the people with the declaration that 'Old Abe' is certain to come down upon them and liberate all their slaves unless they secede and prepare themselves for defence." At this stage of the National trouble, Eaton was far from allying himself unconditionally with the abolitionists of the North.

Following the fortunes of the 27th Ohio, the young Chaplain was under fire with Pope at New Madrid, and served at the desperate battle of Shiloh, or Pittsburgh Landing, and afterwards at Corinth. Later, in November, 1862, while stationed in Tennessee, he became involved through General Grant's orders in the immense responsibility of caring for the contrabands who flocked by thousands to the Union lines. Of this work in the South-

west it is unnecessary to speak at length here, since General Eaton himself tells the story in his chapters on freedmen's affairs.

At the close of the war, after this experience in the Mississippi Valley, General Eaton¹ was called by General Howard, on the recommendation of General Grant, to serve in the Freedmen's Bureau as Assistant Commissioner for the District of Columbia, including Alexandria, Fairfax, and Loudon counties in Virginia, and a general oversight of freedmen's affairs in Maryland. Here on a far more limited scale the work of the Freedmen's Department in the Southwest was repeated.

In December, 1865, when affairs in his district were duly organized and in shape to be transferred to other hands, General Eaton resigned from the Freedmen's Bureau and returned to Memphis, where as editor of a Union paper, known as the *Memphis Post*, he took part in the political campaign which resulted in Grant's election. In 1867 he became State superintendent of public instruction, and for two years strove to enforce the new school law which as journalist and educator he had indirectly supported through the State Legislature. In the face of overwhelming difficulties arising inevitably from the disturbed social conditions, the lack of funds, and the specific antagonism of whole communities to any effort to secure free universal education, he was able successfully to organize and maintain during the term of his administration a free school system for whites and blacks. In 1870 the whole structure

¹ Brevetted Brigadier-General of Volunteers, "for valuable services during the war," on the recommendation of Lieutenant-General Grant, March 13, 1865.

— known at the time as “Eaton’s system” — was swept away, and the law of 1867 under which it had arisen was repealed because the weight of public opinion was against it. The law was undoubtedly too far in advance of public standards to be permanently sustained, but the influence of the experiment endured, and may be traced through later legislation in the complete and final overthrow of the old “pauper system,” and the ultimate establishment of the free American school in a State which has been destined to supply from its intellectual centres at Nashville and Knoxville the chief culture stimulus to the neighboring State communities. This result General Eaton clearly foresaw. Referring in 1869, in his remarkable report to the Governor of Tennessee, to the probable repeal of the school law, he says: “No State in the Union is now satisfied without the efficient system of free public schools. If this one, which has been inaugurated at such cost and with such care, is destroyed in Tennessee, it will necessarily be revived. It must be. Nothing can prevent it in any American State.” The two fundamental principles of universality and freedom were indeed finally incorporated for all time in the system which the State of Tennessee is still adapting and developing to meet its own needs and conditions.

So far in General Eaton’s career three factors of prime importance had been disclosed, all bearing directly upon his future work as United States Commissioner of Education. In the first place, the character of the man himself had been manifested beyond any possibility of error. His large humanity and absolute uprightness, together with great tenacity and power to work, had become recog-

nized by his associates as the very fibre of his personality. Moreover, these qualities had been tested in a field of wide responsibility, and it was clear that with them was combined an organizing faculty which proclaimed the real greatness of the man. These two factors were re-enforced by a third,—perhaps the least essential, but in no way the least fortunate. General Eaton's life to the year 1870 had been to a very unusual degree an uninterrupted process of preparation and of special training for the work he was to do. He went out from New England bearing its educational traditions at a time when these had been re-created by the reforming spirit of Horace Mann and the influence of Henry Barnard. He had passed in orderly sequence from district and city teacher to superintendent, first of the schools of a city and then of the schools of a State. Incidentally he had organized two school systems for the freedmen of the Nation. He had thus learned at first hand the practical details of school keeping, of school supervision and organization, and to this familiarity with the technic of his subject he brought a mind enlarged and matured by the associations and responsibilities which claimed him during the war. Small wonder that President Grant, with a certain quality of clairvoyance which was his, recognized the man and the place, and brought the two together.

The Bureau of Education, of which in March, 1870, General Eaton became the head, had been organized in response to a demand for some recognition by the National Government of the vital subject of education, but the story of its inception and early history is not generally known. The item of illiteracy had not been introduced in the United States Census schedules until 1840. Dr. Henry Barnard

believed that its introduction at that time was effected by his suggestion and influence. Another early attempt to secure governmental recognition to educational affairs originated with the officers of the American Institute, who in January, 1851, organized a committee "to consider the expediency of petitioning Congress with reference to the establishment of an educational department at Washington." Of this committee, John D. Philbrick was appointed chairman. The brunt of the effort, however, to gain for education its due recognition within the Government was borne by two organized bodies of educators, namely, the National Teachers' Association and the National Superintendents' Association. Dating from about 1858 the subject of a National Bureau of Education was frequently under discussion at the annual meetings of one or both of these organizations, and committees of exceptionally able men were appointed to advance the interests of the measure.¹ Among these supporters should be mentioned Daniel Read, the Rev. Dr. McJilton of Maryland, Professor S. H. White of Illinois, W. D. Henkle of Ohio, Professor Andrew J. Rickoff, and others. The Ohio educators—led by Mr. E. E. White, superintendent of schools for that State—were especially prominent in this undertaking, and it was Mr. James A. Garfield, also a native of Ohio, who, in co-operation with Mr. Patterson of New Hampshire and Mr. Boutwell of Massachusetts, finally secured the passage through Congress of the bill creating a Department of Education. Dr. Henry Barnard was appointed the first Commissioner in March,

¹ Proceedings of the National Educational Association, 1901: Establishment of the Office of the Commissioner of Education of the U. S. and Henry Barnard's Relation to it. By W. T. Harris. Appendix, pp. 413-436.

1867, and in that capacity he continued his monumental labor of bringing together and publishing in the *American Journal of Education* the first great collection of educational literature — both native and foreign — ever undertaken in this country. This work, to which Dr. Barnard devoted himself and to which he sacrificed his personal fortune, is of inestimable value to educators all over the land, but as the chief activity of the National Department of Education it failed to justify itself to Congress and the people at large. By 1870 — three years after its establishment — the office had been subordinated to the rank of a Bureau in the Department of the Interior; its appropriation was cut from twenty thousand to six thousand dollars, and its working force, apart from the Commissioner himself, consisted of only two clerks of the lowest grade. The very existence of the Bureau was threatened, while its usefulness was fatally curtailed by the failure of Congress to print its reports. A special report on the condition of the schools in the District of Columbia called for by Congress in March, 1867, was not printed until 1871, and then, partly at least, on the recommendation of the new Commissioner. A second special report on technical instruction, although ordered by the House of Representatives and dated as a Special Report for 1869, was never printed at all save in the *American Journal of Education* (Vol. XXI, issued July, 1871).

Under General Eaton's administration, however, the reports of the Bureau, which until then had not caught the serious attention of Congress or the public, began at once to be printed annually. Packed as they were with significant facts and suggestive comment, they came to be recognized throughout the country as authoritative statements

upon which the most valuable comparisons and generalizations could be based. In referring to the importance of the means devised at this time for the collection of educational data, ex-Commissioner Harris expressed himself as follows: "General Eaton was the true founder of the Bureau of Education, in the sense that he established as the chief work of the Bureau the annual collection of statistics by means of statistical schedules which were sent to all institutions and all general officers to be filled out and returned to the Commissioner from year to year. In this way he trained educators to keep original records of their operations, and made these records available for analysis and comparison."

Largely through General Eaton's efforts the library of the Bureau, which in 1870 numbered under one hundred volumes, had increased at the end of his service of sixteen years to eighteen thousand volumes and forty-seven thousand pamphlets. Within ten years the number of correspondents had twice doubled itself, so that by 1881 direct communication was established between the Bureau and eight thousand seven hundred and seventy-four persons in this country and abroad, irrespective of the hundreds of thousands among whom the reports and special bulletins of information circulated. The Bureau's appropriation was enlarged,—though it remains to-day smaller than that accorded the United States Fish Commission,—and after many vicissitudes a permanent if inadequate home was assigned it. By 1886 the number of its regular assistants had increased to thirty-eight.

But outward marks of progress such as these were merely the signals of the true growth of the office and of

the functions which it fulfilled. From the first, General Eaton set himself to make the Bureau an educational exchange which should reach and stimulate the life of the people, and to present through his reports what he himself designated in his report of 1871 as "a record of the Nation's progress in intelligence and virtue."

The constant opposition which the Bureau encountered from its political enemies was in itself enough to absorb the energies of one man, and only General Eaton's keen diplomatic sense, which was ever one of his most remarkable characteristics, sufficed to protect the office against those who strove to harass it. The country at large was disposed to look upon the Bureau with indifference. A very large element in the South regarded it as an office especially designed to enforce unwelcome measures, and confronted it with the antagonism which any manifestation, real or supposed, of the "centralization" menace was apt to arouse. But through Commissioner Eaton's intimate knowledge of conditions in the South, through the helpful relationships he had already established with many leading Southern men,—relationships which he took care to foster and extend,—and by constantly testifying in word and deed to the non-partisan and wholly beneficent aims of the Bureau, the prejudice of the South was so completely broken down that it is to-day probably the most loyal of all the Bureau's supporters. The influence of the office in sustaining the Southern element which favored educational reforms was very great, and by the diffusion of facts and figures for comparison the Bureau had unquestionably a direct and beneficial effect upon the State educational systems of the South. With a keen instinct for essentials

which professional educators frequently lack, Commissioner Eaton realized that the Bureau must first be put in touch with the people and their present interests if it were to serve them either as an agency for registering their progress or as a guide to finer achievement. It was this sense which gave direction and power to that remarkable executive faculty which characterized the Commissioner, and which in turn made of the Bureau a true digestive organism for the educational interests of the country,—an organism receiving promiscuously from countless sources the materials which it re-created into higher, life-sustaining elements. Like Horace Mann, whom as an educational statesman John Eaton resembled in more ways than one, he marshalled all the forces at his command to convince the people of the supreme obligation to educate. The fate of the children of the Nation rests ultimately with the public conscience, and to reach and stimulate that became the determining aim of all the Bureau's operations. Out of his wide experience in school affairs, Commissioner Eaton was able to devise schedules for reporting the conditions and progress of rural, city, and State schools, of colleges and universities, technical and professional institutions, and movements for the care of neglected or vicious children. His training in Ohio had put him in touch with the methods of one of the most enlightened groups of educators in this country, and by basing his investigations upon the records which he knew to be maintained by them, he was able to achieve practical results from his inquiries. His efforts also tended to raise and make uniform the standard of the records kept by educators all over the land.

But no amount of statistical detail ever betrayed General

Eaton from the essentials of his work. The system which he constructed remained an organism by reason of the vitality which animated it, and never degenerated into the pedantic formalism of a mere fact-getting device. It was the *educational function* of the office to which all its other activities were ultimately tributary. In a very profound sense John Eaton educated the generation of adults whom he reached, and built, in Browning's beautiful phrase, "broad on the roots of things."

The Commissioner never became a special pleader for any theory of pedagogy or of educational advance, but he was keen to recognize the main tendencies manifested in the growth of the educational ideal, and one may not venture to estimate the limit of his influence in fostering the great educational movements of his time. He devoted himself with great energy to the cause of National aid to education, for he believed with President Grant and Senator Hoar and the few others equally far-seeing that only an adequate provision for universal education could justify the Fifteenth Amendment, or avert the menace from ignorance and greed which demoralizes our political and social life to-day. He hoped to find in Senator Blair a champion who could successfully promote this cause in Congress, and accordingly, until his own resignation in 1886, he stood stanchly behind the Senator in that remarkable fight which covered the ten years from 1880 to 1890. A notable series of statistical tables was prepared by the Bureau, and facts and arguments bearing on the issue between education and illiteracy were collected with untiring energy and deep comprehension alike of the aim to be pursued and the method of pursuing it. This material

was incorporated in Senator Blair's remarkable speeches. Although the bill providing National aid to education failed to become a law, the alignment of facts and deductions therefrom presented in the debate and preserved in the Congressional Records constitute an argument to which the Nation and its law-makers will undoubtedly be forced to give heed.

It would be impossible within the limits of this sketch to speak at all adequately of the various movements fostered by General Eaton during his administration of the Bureau, but it should be said in general terms that no one of the great educational experiments which crowded the years of his commissionership was without the help of his informing and promoting spirit. He was a valued and trusted counsellor of General Armstrong, and indeed of all the little group of devoted educators who have worked for the Indian and the Negro. He sustained in his reports the theory of industrial, commercial, and agricultural training at a time when the theory was by no means acceptable to our schoolmen; and he sustained its practice by exerting himself and his influence specifically in support of struggling institutions.

Owing in part to his army experience General Eaton recognized promptly the importance of the training schools for nurses, and was one of their original promoters in this country. He was especially active in organizing the Washington Training School for Nurses, of which in 1877 he was one of the incorporators. In 1879 the Bureau issued the first circular of information on the subject of nurses' training schools. In this publication General Eaton personally urged the importance of the work and summarized

the tentative efforts then making to further it in this country. Only nine training schools were then reported as in existence in the United States. Recently the Bureau of Education reported five hundred and fifty-two. General Eaton's share in the development of this very important movement can scarcely be overestimated. In addition to the dissemination of arguments favorable to it and of information concerning it, he exerted his great personal influence through public addresses and in the countless ways open to a man of his exceptional tact and energy. He was instrumental in bringing the few physicians who at first favored the training of nurses into helpful relations to the work and to each other, and through such co-operation practically secured a general working basis for the movement.

The Kindergarten was another of the great experimental efforts of the time to which Commissioner Eaton gave his cordial welcome and support.

In 1876, in connection with the exhibit of educational affairs at the Centennial Exposition, when the organization of the American Library Association was effected under the leadership of C. A. Cutter, Commissioner Eaton presented through his Bureau the first general report ever undertaken of the libraries of the United States, and thereby immensely furthered the transformation of the librarians from detached groups of workers into a professional body with a nucleus for organization and future growth.¹ Eaton, by the way, was a pioneer in the now universal custom of utilizing the great national and international expositions as a means of presenting vivid conceptions of educational

¹ See Appendix (Special Reports).

progress and of stimulating popular interest in the subject. His large acquaintance with school men and legislators, and his grasp of the essential elements of an effective exhibit of education, gave to his work in this field a special significance.¹

The problem of educating the natives of Alaska appealed very strongly to General Eaton. His first annual report as Commissioner of Education, issued in 1870, called special attention to Alaska's desperate need for civil government and educational opportunities, and with the exception of the year 1876 a similar appeal was made annually on behalf of this neglected territory until Congress took action in the matter. In 1878 General Eaton met the Rev. Sheldon Jackson, D.D., who, as superintendent of Presbyterian missions for the Rocky Mountain Territories had organized the first permanent American school in Alaska. Dr. Jackson was undoubtedly the best informed and most devoted friend whom the Alaskan interests could claim, and Commissioner Eaton promptly recognized in him these qualifications. He established Dr. Jackson in his own office, and planned with him a vigorous campaign for schools and other essentials of civil government.

In the course of this campaign, which covered many

¹ During General Eaton's administration there were six expositions held in different countries, of which five were international. The Bureau of Education was prominent in each of these, and its services were recognized by the following acknowledgments and awards: Universal Exposition at Vienna (1873), Grand Diploma of honor; International Exposition of Chili (1875), medal of honor, first and second prize medals, diploma of award; International Exhibition at Philadelphia (1876), certificate of award; Universal Exposition at Paris (1878), three diplomas of gold medals; Southern Exposition at Louisville (1883 and 1884), bronze medals, certificate of award; World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition at New Orleans (1885), four certificates of award.

years, every possible educational and political pressure was brought to bear upon Congress and the public at large. Finally, in May, 1884, a bill was passed insuring the rights of civil government to Alaska and appropriating twenty-five thousand dollars for education. An Alaskan division was established in the Bureau of Education; the Commissioner was intrusted by the Secretary of the Interior with the management of the fund and charged with the duty of organizing and maintaining a system of schools. On General Eaton's recommendation Dr. Jackson was put at the head of the new division. Eaton's enthusiasm and zeal for this cause never flagged during the fourteen years of constant effort which preceded the victory, although during those years he was directing and controlling other movements with equal energy and wisdom.

But the sphere of the Commissioner's influence was not limited to this country. One by one the South American States, as they put aside the influences of Spanish civilization, sent commissions to the United States to study our institutions. These commissions consulted with the heads of the different Departments, and invariably, it may be said, received the impress of General Eaton's work and thought.

The educational system of Japan owes its efficiency largely to John Eaton's influence. The first Japanese commission which visited America numbered among its members the present Prince Tanaka, then Japanese Commissioner of Education. With his interpreters — among whom his favorite was Joseph Hardy Neesuma — Tanaka visited Commissioner Eaton daily for nearly two weeks, consulting with him upon the establishment of educational institutions in Japan. The Commissioner not only laid

open his store of wisdom and experience on these occasions, but with the tenacity characteristic of him he never let go his hold upon the educational interests of the newly developing country, and never perhaps during his official career lost an opportunity to impress upon its authorities the doctrines he had inculcated.

The recognition of the United States Bureau of Education by foreign governments has steadily progressed from the later years of General Eaton's administration until the present time. At the zenith of his career Eaton was an uncommonly prominent figure before the public, both here and abroad, and many marks of courtesy and appreciation were bestowed upon him by foreign governments and sovereigns; but his determined effort to escape publicity made him avoid honors that many men in his position would have sought. Between the years 1875 and 1885 no man in America wielded a greater influence over the men and the problems connected with questions of public instruction in this country, yet no trace of ostentation or aggressiveness was ever developed in him. Dr. Harris, in speaking of General Eaton to the present writer, placed his humility and his loving recognition of the good elements in the work of others foremost among the personal qualities that made his administration what it was. This characteristic humility was nowhere more completely exemplified than in the ex-Commissioner's attitude toward Dr. Henry Barnard, and it is a beautiful symbol of loyalty and justice between men that General Eaton's feeling of ungrudging appreciation for the greatness of his predecessor should be sustained and carried forward by the loyalty of Dr. Harris's attitude toward General Eaton himself.

In 1886, on account of ill health, General Eaton withdrew from the Bureau. At the request of the Administration he had remained in active service nearly a year after tendering his resignation. He was succeeded by Commissioner Dawson.

After five years of exacting work as President of Marietta College, Ohio, and an intermission during which as his health permitted he devoted himself to various crusades of education and reform, General Eaton was appointed in January, 1899, first American superintendent of schools in Porto Rico, under the military government. He resigned the presidency of Sheldon Jackson College, Salt Lake City, and entered upon the duties of his new office. As resident superintendent he at once reformed the school curriculum, — relieving it of its excessive burden of religious and doctrinal subjects, — provided for the more adequate education of girls, especially in the rural districts, and by abolishing the fee system, which had operated to exclude the poorer classes, he made the schools free to all residents of Porto Rico between six and eighteen years of age. Indeed all the school reforms that were especially calculated to arouse antagonism because they trenched upon old established customs and abuses profitable to special groups and individuals but fatal to the public welfare were accomplished under the military superintendency inaugurated by General Eaton. The substitute system might be mentioned as one case in point. Under the old Spanish regime individuals were in the habit of drawing the salary of a teacher and devoting themselves at the same time to some other occupation, while the cheapest available substitute was retained to keep school. The regulations devised by

General Eaton cleared the ground of such encumbrances and prepared the way for the constructive work to which the civil authorities were able to devote themselves.¹

In May, 1899, General Eaton was obliged to resign on account of serious ill-health. The work was carried forward by his successor and former assistant, Dr. Victor S. Clark, and later by Dr. George G. Groff. The notable achievements of General Eaton and his two followers under the military government should be recognized by the civil officers who succeeded them, as well as by the public generally.

In the final analysis of John Eaton's career it is the character of the man himself which emerges as the essential factor. The spirit of true humility in which he served is the more remarkable when it is recognized as characteristic of one whose convictions were intense and whose influence had been consciously exercised and felt so widely. From his early maturity he manifested extraordinary power of projecting his own enthusiasms and kindling a similar spirit in other men, so that his capacity of working through others was one of the most remarkable factors in his life. This trait, indeed, was closely related to the essence of his greatness, for it proceeded directly from that organizing genius which reaches a distant goal by seizing upon and developing the possibilities that lie close at hand.

The difficulty of preparing even a brief biographical sketch has been seriously complicated by the lack of

¹ For accounts of the American school system in Porto Rico, see War Department Report for 1900, Vol. I, Part 13, pp. 124-128. See also Report for 1899, and Senate Document 256.

personal memoranda, and by General Eaton's own ineradicable unwillingness to talk about himself. In these circumstances it has been the aim of the present writer to seek and emphasize the qualities that lay behind the achievements rather than to attempt any adequate chronicle of the achievements themselves, and, on the other hand, much has been omitted here which is elsewhere accessible.

The force of intellect and personality, as well as the beauty of character which were his, General Eaton could not hide; but he was far more eager to serve than he was ready to record his services, and hence his full contribution can have been truly known only to a few of his contemporaries.

A word may be permissible here as to the value of the record of General Eaton's work as presented in this volume. Apart from the reminiscences of men now famous, and apart from the important data concerning the Negro's history here collected and made available for reference, the book, it would seem, has a deeper and more human significance. The call of our National patriotism, let us hope, is beginning to be uttered in tones, on the one hand, less pharisaical, and on the other less resentful, than was wont to be its quality not many years ago. Especially, perhaps, at the North is there a just revolt against the tinge of moral patronage and of immoral self-complacency which sometimes marred the attitude of Northern patriots toward their fellows of the South. Such a revolt is altogether salutary; yet it suggests a special use for the modest record of a good man's work.

It would be sad if we as a Nation, in our abhorrence of

the injustice, cruelty, and greed from which the reconstructing Southern States were made to suffer, were to forget the patient, just, and selfless efforts of individual men who yet, officially, were part of the system that sometimes oppressed.

General Eaton's book is an enduring record of sincerity, kindness, and far-sighted justice on the part of one whose work was done amid the scenes of a great and complicated tragedy, — a tragedy cheapened at moments by the baser passions of mankind, and yet a tragedy touched and illumined by a greater hope. To the reconstructive and constructive labors of men like Saxton, Eaton, Armstrong, and others either famous or unknown, are due in great measure the saner retrospect, the growing sense of present fellowship, and the outreaching hope of the reunited Nation.

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D. G. Swain *should read* Wager Swayne

Page 47, line 9

Wood *should read* Wool

Page 56, line 7

Andrews *should read* Andrew

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MY acquaintance with General Grant began in the autumn of 1862, after the battle of Corinth had been fought and Grant had moved his forces somewhat southward and westward preparatory to the great Vicksburg campaign. The base of supplies for the advancing army was at Holly Springs, Mississippi; its headquarters were at La Grange, Tennessee, — a village in the southwestern angle of the State, — while somewhat to the east, at Grand Junction, was a brigade of Ohio and Missouri troops commanded by Colonel J. W. Fuller of the 27th Ohio Infantry, of which I was chaplain.

For the first time in the course of its progress the Army of the Tennessee was entering a region densely populated by the Negroes, and was face to face with conditions even more aggravated than any that had confronted the Union forces in the South Atlantic States. With the advance of the forty-five thousand troops or more in Grant's command,

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the cotton plantations were abandoned by their owners, and the Negroes, thrown thus upon their own resources, flocked in vast numbers — an army in themselves — to the camps of the Yankees. Such an influx constituted a menace to soldiers which it is difficult to overestimate. Imagine, if you will, a slave population, springing from antecedent barbarism, rising up and leaving its ancient bondage, forsaking its local traditions and all the associations and attractions of the old plantation life, coming garbed in rags or in silks, with feet shod or bleeding, individually or in families and larger groups, — an army of slaves and fugitives, pushing its way irresistibly toward an army of fighting men, perpetually on the defensive and perpetually ready to attack. The arrival among us of these hordes was like the oncoming of cities. There was no plan in this exodus, no Moses to lead it. Unlettered reason or the mere inarticulate decision of instinct brought them to us. Often the slaves met prejudices against their color more bitter than any they had left behind. But their own interests were identical, they felt, with the objects of our armies: a blind terror stung them, an equally blind hope allured them, and to us they came. Their condition was appalling. There were men, women, and children in every stage of disease or decrepitude, often nearly naked, with flesh torn by the terrible experiences of their escapes. Sometimes they were intelligent and eager to help themselves; often they were bewildered or stupid or possessed by the wildest notions of what liberty might mean, — expecting to exchange labor, and obedience to the will of another, for idleness and freedom from restraint. Such ignorance and perverted notions produced a veritable moral chaos.

Cringing deceit, theft, licentiousness — all the vices which slavery inevitably fosters — were the hideous companions of nakedness, famine, and disease. A few had profited by the misfortunes of the master and were jubilant in their unwonted ease and luxury, but these stood in lurid contrast to the grimmer aspects of the tragedy, — the women in travail, the helplessness of childhood and of old age, the horrors of sickness and of frequent death. Small wonder that men paused in bewilderment and panic, foreseeing the demoralization and infection of the Union soldier and the downfall of the Union cause.

In my capacity of chaplain, and with others, chaplains and officers, I had done what I could to relieve the most urgent and immediate cases of distress, and to check, in at least a few instances, elements the most dangerous to the welfare of our soldiers. But the individual efforts made by my comrades and myself were futile to cope with the tremendous difficulties of the situation. Some radical step needed to be taken. What that step was to be, and how it was to involve relationships with men then unknown to me who were to exercise the most enduring influence over our National affairs, I had not the remotest intimation, and when that intimation first came to me, it found me wholly unprepared.

Among the most vivid of my memories is a picture of our camp at Grand Junction on a certain evening of November, 1862. We had just fought the battles of Iuka and Corinth, and the troops, though gradually being moved toward Vicksburg in small bodies, for the most part were passing the time leisurely in drilling and in the routine duties of the camp. It had been a cool

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autumn day and the soldiers had amused themselves and kept us all warm by building bonfires here and there at



the heads of the several regiments. The one at the head of the brigade was especially large. Our camp was in the midst of a primeval forest, and the brilliant firelight and long-drawn shadows made visible for a con-

siderable distance the grotesque figures of those sitting round the blaze. There was great familiarity and freedom among the officers, and on this particular evening Colonel Fuller of the 27th Ohio, then in command of the brigade, with members of his staff, had been out calling. As we sat about the fire the Colonel and his associates came riding in. They were in high spirits, and something of their jokes and laughter seemed to be at my expense. The Colonel was a resident of Toledo—where I had been superintendent of schools—and a man of strong religious feeling. We were good friends, and he had invited me to tent with him. In the midst of the merriment I caught phrases now and then which had no meaning for me, and which yet made me vaguely uneasy, for there was an undercurrent of seriousness in what was said, and the words implied that some order had been received involving me. I withdrew from the group and went to the office, where, in charge of the papers, was a lieutenant who never joked. I asked him if he had anything for me, whereupon he turned to a small portable desk of the kind in use in

the army, reached his hand to a pigeonhole, and handed me a paper. By the dim light of a tallow dip I read to my dismay the following order:

HEADQUARTERS 13TH ARMY CORPS,
DEPARTMENT OF THE TENNESSEE,
LA GRANGE, TENN., November 11, 1862.

SPECIAL ORDERS,
NO. 15.

Chaplain Eaton, of the Twenty-seventh Ohio Infantry Volunteers, is hereby appointed to take charge of the contrabands that come into camp in the vicinity of the post, organizing them into suitable companies for working, see that they are properly cared for, and set them to work picking, ginning and baling all cotton now out and ungathered in field.

Suitable guards will be detailed by commanding officers nearest where the parties are at work, to protect them from molestation.

For further instructions the officer in charge of these labors will call at these headquarters.

By order of Maj.-Gen. U. S. GRANT.

(Signed) JNO. A. RAWLINS,
Lieut.-Col. and A. A.-Gen'l.

No language can describe the effect of this order upon me. Never in the entire army service, through the whole war, during imprisonment or in the midst of battles with the roar of cannon in my ears, amid the horrors of the hospital or in facing my own exposure to assassination, do I recall such a shock of surprise, amounting to consternation, as I experienced when reading this brief summons to undertake what seemed to me an enterprise beyond the possibility of human achievement. I retired to my cot and drew the blankets round me,—not to sleep, but to think it out alone. It was useless to question what it meant or what my future was to be. Here was an imperative command, and I was wholly in the military grip. The night was

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spent in vain conjectures. Of what mettle was the man to whom I was to report? What were the duties to which he was to order me? What I knew of the task itself filled me with despair; what I had heard of my commanding officer filled me with apprehension. The order required me to report to an incompetent and disagreeable man — so rumor called him — and to fulfil a most arduous and unpleasant duty. Had it called me to discharge a responsibility in the commissary or the medical departments, or in that of the quartermaster, had I been called upon to accompany a raid and share in it, I should have known what to do; but as it was, I was left wholly to the mercy of the wildest conjectures. The brief words of the order filled my mind: "Chaplain Eaton is hereby appointed —" My first name, even, was unknown to General Grant. Why had he fastened upon me for this impossible task? I have never known the explanation of the riddle, unless it was that Grant followed the suggestion of a man who had seen something of my work among the soldiers in Missouri and again at Grand Junction, and who in this crisis had mentioned my name to the General.

Daylight came to an agitated mind. The questions of my companions had to be answered. Everybody around was stirred up by the order. The members of the mess could talk of nothing else. All sympathized with me in the task to which I had been assigned; no one saw how it was to be performed. All sorts of questions were put to me. Where would I begin? What would I do? There was nothing to be done but to obey, and the first token of my obedience was to report in person to General Grant, whose headquarters at La Grange, already referred to, were sev-

eral miles away. When the time came, I mounted my horse and began a solitary ride.

As I passed through regiments, brigades, and divisions, my mind was harassed with recollections of other occasions when I had been brought into contact with the leaders of our forces. I had been an enthusiastic supporter of Frémont, but from what I saw of him at his headquarters near Jefferson City — following a brief experience as prisoner of war — I received an impression of incapacity which caused me to suffer a great disillusionment. A similar acquaintance with Halleck had left me still pessimistic as to the advantages to be derived from any intimacy with our commanders. Recollections of this sort taken in connection with the order under which I was acting were scarcely reassuring, but they became insignificant in comparison with the actual difficulties presented by the Negro situation to the man who should attempt to order it. I shrank from the duty assigned to me as from an impossible undertaking doomed to bring only suffering and failure; and in addition to this I regretted keenly the work which I should have to abandon if Grant's order to me were to be fulfilled. I was the only chaplain of the brigade so far able to be constantly at his post, and my services were called for more or less in each of the four regiments. Sometimes on the Sabbath I was the only chaplain able to hold services; at such times the regiment would be drawn up around me in a hollow square. The sick must be visited, the sad correspondence with the families of the soldiers who had lost their lives at Corinth and Iuka must be attended to. This in itself took so much of my time that a young soldier was detailed to assist me. I had charge of the little

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regimental library which B. F. Mather, a banker of Cleveland, and others had given me; in addition the different companies had raised two hundred dollars and intrusted it to me to be expended in subscriptions to newspapers and periodicals which were forwarded to us by mail wherever we went. I had been appointed sanitary inspector for the brigade, and found constantly many important questions of health that demanded my attention. Besides all this, close and helpful friendships had sprung up. My life in my chosen profession was already full, and I could not see my way to abandoning these various duties. With my mind centred on the appeal which I intended to make to the General for release from the task assigned me by his order, I rode into Grant's headquarters.

CHAPTER II

Arrival at La Grange. First interview with General Grant. A pleasant disillusionment. Grant's plans for the Negroes. I leave my regimental companions.

I DISMOUNTED, hitched my horse, and approaching a sentry who paced in front of a large house, I inquired of him where General Grant was to be found. He directed me to enter the house, and, pointing to the passageway, told me that I should find the General's orderly at his door and that he would direct me. My heart was thumping violently, but I found the orderly, and asked to have him announce that Chaplain Eaton had come to report in accordance with orders. To my surprise he said,—pointing to the door before which we were standing,—“Tap on the door and he'll tell you to come in.” This seemed very different from my previous experiences at headquarters. I rapped, and a voice said very quietly, “Come in.” Upon entering the room the same quiet voice said to me, “Have a seat, and I'll talk with you in a few moments.” Then, as I announced my name, the General added, “Oh, you are the man who has all these darkies on his shoulders.”

I saw at a glance that I had interrupted a council of the various generals in Grant's command, and I felt distinctly out of place. Grant, who was seated at the centre-table,

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was distinguished from his officers only by the shoulder-straps of a Major-General. My eyes were alert for the signs on his face of the dissipation with which rumor charged him, but I saw at once that no such signs were there. Everything about him betokened moderation and simplicity. His simplicity was no less obvious than the respect which his associate generals manifested for him. I felt my preconceived notions of headquarters and the atmosphere surrounding them undergoing a change. From the concluding words of the conference it was evident that important details in connection with the projected movement on Vicksburg had been under discussion. The officers soon filed out, and as they passed me, one and another threw me a glance of amused comprehension, as if they had some suspicion of what my duties were to be. When the last one had left the room, Grant turned to me, and pointing to the table at which he was seated said, "Sit up, and we'll talk." I drew my chair to his table, hardly knowing whether I was the same man who had ridden into camp with such unpleasant memories of former experiences with our commanders and such dark forebodings of the experience before me.

An earnest conversation followed, which, though it involved me in great responsibilities, relieved my mind once and for all of my anxiety concerning the man to whom I had come to report. At first I exerted myself to the utmost to have the order which had brought me revoked. I described the situation in the brigade, where, in the absence of so many of the chaplains, I had been able to become active and helpful among a large body of soldiers. I emphasized my inability, lacking as I was in commanding

rank, to enforce the orders I should find it necessary to issue. To take the colored people out of the camps would bring me into conflict with all the officers now making personal use of their services; to set them at work in the cotton fields, the product of which was to be turned over to the Government, would bring me into conflict with all the speculators in the cotton interest. The price of cotton was then mounting, and speculation ran high. I felt so intensely my own inability to meet the situation that I put forward all the energy I could summon to get the order revoked. All that I said had no more effect upon that quiet, attentive face than a similar appeal might have had upon a stone wall. When my arguments were exhausted, the General simply remarked, "Mr. Eaton, I have ordered you to report to me in person, and I will take care of you." And so he did.

Then followed a long and intensely interesting talk on the Negro problem, with which thus early we had been brought face to face. I had been studying as occasion permitted some phases of the situation, but as yet I had found no one ready to offer a solution. The whole question of methods of dealing with the Negro had scarcely as yet been faced by the National Government. Congress, it is true, had emancipated the slaves of the District of Columbia, which fell directly under its jurisdiction. General Butler had cut the knot of tangled relationship between the army and the blacks by declaring the slaves of those in rebellion against the Government to be contraband of war, and hence liable to retention within the lines of the Union forces as a means of crippling the Confederates. There were, however, many Union men who were slaveholders,

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especially in the border States, and it was essential to retain their sympathies. The slaves were the property of these men, and could not be molested. But how could the army discriminate?

Difficult as the question was, Grant had boldly undertaken to solve it within the limits of his own command. Nor had he waited for instructions from Washington before outlining his plans. The order to me was issued, as we have seen, on November 11. It was not until four days later that he sent the following message, dated from La Grange, to General Halleck:

“Citizens south of us are leaving their homes and negroes coming in by wagon loads. What will I do with them? I am now having all the cotton still standing out picked by them.”

On November 16, General Halleck sent the following reply:

“The Secretary of War directs that you employ the refugee negroes as teamsters, laborers, etc., so far as you have use for them, in the Quartermaster’s department, on forts, railroads, etc. : also in picking and removing cotton on account of the Government. So far as possible subsist them and your army on the rebel inhabitants of Mississippi.”

In the course of my first conversation with General Grant his mind had already grappled with this problem, and had far outstripped these meagre instructions, which, indeed, he had not as yet received.

Grant called attention to the fact that the conditions threatening the army would inevitably become still more aggravated as his forces advanced into the heart of the great slave population. He pointed out how little Con-

gress — representing the political power of the Nation — had done as yet to provide adequate escape from the military complications arising out of the conditions of slavery in the midst of which our armies were moving. It would not do, he said, for him to pass these problems indifferently; they must be met and solved, and he had undertaken the responsibility, as his order indicated. He had been compelled, he said, to take this step from two considerations: first, that of military necessity, — the obligation of protecting his troops against the diseases and demoralization to which contact with this body of disorderly people subjected them; second, the dictates of mere humanity demanded that these helpless people should be themselves protected, so far as possible, and spared all possible suffering. The need for action was especially urgent as winter was coming on and the Negroes were incapable of making any provision for their own safety and comfort. The surrounding country possessed ample means of subsisting the fugitives until such time as they could care for themselves, and in view of the condition out of which they sprang, the General believed it to be necessary that for a while, at least, some form of guardianship should be exercised over them.¹

¹ I make the following quotation from General Grant's Memoirs, Vol. I, pp. 424-426. As has been pointed out by a recent writer, Paul Skeels Peirce, in his excellent monograph entitled "The Freedmen's Bureau," Grant's opening statement is not wholly fair to the efforts of others who preceded General Grant in point of time. But it should be borne in mind in this connection that the armies of the East and West were so severed that practically nothing was known by us as to what had been done on behalf of the Negroes in the East. General Grant says:

"It was at this point, probably, where the first idea of a 'Freedman's Bureau' took its origin. Orders of the government prohibited the expul-

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The General next began to outline the most important feature of his plans,—the means by which the army of blacks might be transformed from a menace into a positive assistance to the Union forces. The Negroes, he said, could perform many of the camp duties now in the hands of the soldiers, serving as fatigue men in the departments of the surgeon-general, the quartermaster, and the commissary, as well as rendering assistance in various engineering

sion of the negroes from the protection of the army, when they came in voluntarily. Humanity forbade allowing them to starve. With such an army of them, of all ages and both sexes, as had congregated about Grand Junction, amounting to many thousands, it was impossible to advance. There was no special authority for feeding them unless they were employed as teamsters, cooks, and pioneers with the army; but only able-bodied young men were suited for such work. This labor would support but a very limited percentage of them. The plantations were all deserted; the cotton and corn were ripe; men, women and children above ten years of age could be employed in saving these crops. To do this work with contrabands, or to have it done, organization under a competent chief was necessary. On inquiring for such a man, Chaplain Eaton, now and for many years the very able U. S. Commissioner of Education, was suggested. He proved as efficient in that field as he has since done in his present one. I gave him all the assistants and guards he called for. We together fixed the prices to be charged for the negro labor, whether rendered to the government or to individuals. The cotton was to be picked from abandoned plantations, the laborers to receive the stipulated price (my recollection is twelve and a half cents per pound for picking and ginning) from the quartermaster, he shipping the cotton north to be sold for the benefit of the government. Citizens remaining on their plantations were allowed the privilege of having their crops saved by freedmen on the same terms.

"At once the freedmen became self-sustaining. The money was not paid to them directly, but was expended judiciously for their benefit. They gave me no trouble afterwards.

"Later the freedmen were engaged in cutting wood used for the supply of government steamers (steamers chartered and which the government had to supply with fuel). Those supplying their own fuel paid a much higher price. In this way a fund was created not only sufficient to feed and clothe all, old and young, male and female, but to build them comfortable cabins, hospitals for the sick, and to supply them with many comforts they had never known before."

operations, such as building bridges, roads, earthworks, and so on. The women could serve in the camp kitchens and as nurses in the hospitals. He then went on to say that when it had been made clear that the Negro, as an independent laborer — for he was not yet a freedman — could do these things well, it would be very easy to put a musket in his hands and make a soldier of him, and if he fought well, eventually to put the ballot in his hand and make him a citizen. Obviously I was dealing with no incompetent, but a man capable of handling large issues. Never before in those early and bewildering days had I heard the problem of the future of the Negro attacked so vigorously and with such humanity combined with practical good sense. During that first interview Grant outlined with perfect simplicity and deep comprehension the direction along which, with some lamentable exceptions, events have since moved. I was no longer in doubt of the character of the man with whom I was dealing.

Before I left General Grant I had received from him definite instructions to establish my first camp at Grand Junction, where the situation, as I could see, offered decided advantages. The people of the villages and neighborhood generally were mostly Confederates who had fled at the approach of our armies, leaving their houses deserted. It was Grant's plan to use those abandoned houses as shelters for the contrabands.

Encouraged by the General's support and his confidence in the possibility of working out a solution to all the difficult questions before us, I took my leave, and again mounted my horse and rode at once to the site recommended by Grant for our first contraband camp, and after

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looking over the situation I turned back to my brigade quarters for the night. There was no end to the questions of my companions in the brigade. They formed a noble group of men, and not the least of my trials was the separation from them which my new work would necessitate. In addition to my good friend Colonel J. W. Fuller, with whom I had already shared many experiences, I recall most vividly a little group of individuals whose later development in public life marked them as the men of unusual promise which they seemed to me in those early days of their careers. There was Colonel, afterwards General, E. F. Noyes, who became Governor of Ohio. He was, like myself, a Dartmouth graduate. He became an eminent lawyer in Cincinnati, and for a time was our Minister to France. General J. W. Sprague, later Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for Arkansas and Missouri, was another of the group. He superintended the building of the Western Division of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Lieutenant Samuel Thomas, afterwards Brigadier-General by brevet,—a man of great business and executive capacity,—stands somewhat apart from the others and in even closer association with my memories of those days. He became, as we shall see, my special assistant in the work upon which I was just entering, and he remained my lifelong friend. Still another of the men I was destined to leave so unexpectedly was Colonel D. G. Swain, who came out of the war Major-General by brevet. He was an eminent lawyer of Toledo, and later of New York City, and at the close of the war became Assistant Commissioner of Freedmen for Alabama.

With such men as the commanders and officers of the

brigade I naturally looked forward, so long as the war should spare me, to very useful and happy regimental relations in my chosen profession ; but the order under which I was acting took me into entirely new conditions and required my complete separation from the brigade. Had I remained with it in my old capacity of chaplain, I should, with my companions, have followed Sherman in his march to the sea. The brigade as an organization, and apart from the men who composed it, had a somewhat unusual history, for it kept its identity throughout all the changes of the war. But my duties left me little time for reflection. The morning following my interview with General Grant I said good-by to my comrades, some of whom I scarcely saw again, and rode away to begin my new work.

CHAPTER III

First camp for the "contrabands." Some early orders. Heavy responsibilities assumed by Grant therein. The loss of Holly Springs, and how Grant bore it. Grant's father talks of his son.

THE spot where I was to establish my first camp was about four or five miles distant from the encampment of the army, and thither to the deserted houses we conducted as many as we could accommodate of the ragged and suffering Negroes. Old tents were used to shelter those whom the houses could not receive. One of the first and most important duties was to search out the sick and have them properly provided for. I remember helping with my own hands to move eight smallpox patients whom we discovered among the soldiers and that army of contrabands, and whom we disposed temporarily in a deserted house apart from the other sick, who were lodged in a hospital improvised in a railroad station, and in charge of Dr. W. R. Thrall of the 27th Ohio. Reflecting on the difficulties of those days and my own modest equipment for such work, I am inclined to agree with Dr. A. D. Mayo, who has remarked that "The clearing of the camps of the sick and dying, suffering with contagious diseases, was a task for a national sanitary commission rather than a young chaplain of volunteers."¹

¹ Common Schools in the South. 1861-1876. In Report for 1900-1901 of United States Commissioner of Education, p. 427.

My Assistant General Superintendent, writing at a later period of the district about Vicksburg, which became his special charge, has so well described the similar situation then facing us at Grand Junction that I quote a passage from one of his reports:

"I hope I may never be called on again to witness the horrible scenes I saw in those first days of the history of the freedmen in the Mississippi Valley. Assistants were hard to get, especially the kind that would do any good in our camps. A detailed soldier in each camp of a thousand people was the best that could be done. His duties were so onerous that he ended by doing nothing. . . . In reviewing the condition of the people at that time, I am not surprised at the marvellous stories told by visitors who caught an occasional glimpse of the misery and wretchedness in these camps. . . .¹ Our efforts to do anything for these people, as they herded together in masses, when founded on any expectation that they would help themselves, often failed; they had become so completely broken down in spirit, through suffering, that it was almost impossible to arouse them."

The want and destitution were appalling, and the provision wherewith to meet the conditions and ameliorate them was far from adequate. The situation confronting those of us who had the ordering of the early camps was really the clashing of the two antagonistic conditions, — liberty and bondage. To the Union man there might be little doubt as to the ultimate issue, but nobody could say in detail just how the readjustment was to come about. How was the slave to be transformed into a freeman?

¹ Even as late as the spring of 1864, misrepresentation of the conditions in the Valley was such that Major George W. Young, my Superintendent for Natchez, reported that the deaths at that point, said by a visitor to have been fifty a day, did not average more than six. Major Young was one of the most intelligent and efficient of my officers. He lost his own life through exposure, and devotion to his work.

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This was the question before us; and meanwhile how was he to be fed and clad and sheltered? In order to meet the new and difficult questions that were constantly arising, I went day after day to headquarters to consult with General Grant so long as he remained at La Grange. As occasion required, he issued orders increasing my authority, or making more definite statements of his wishes. The following order was issued as a supplement to the first one already quoted:

HEADQUARTERS 13TH ARMY CORPS,
DEPARTMENT OF THE TENNESSEE,
SPECIAL FIELD ORDERS, LA GRANGE, TENN., NOV. 14, 1862.
No. 4.

Chaplain J. Eaton, jr., of the 27th Regiment Ohio Infantry Vols., is hereby appointed to take charge of all fugitive slaves that are now or may from time to time come within the military lines of the advancing army in this vicinity, not employed and registered in accordance with General Orders, No. 72, from Headquarters District of West Tennessee, and will open a camp for them at Grand Junction, Tenn., where they will be suitably cared for and organized into companies and set to work picking, ginning, and baling all cotton now out standing in fields.

Commanding officers of troops will send all fugitives that come within the lines, together with teams, cooking utensils, and other baggage as they may bring with them, to Chaplain Eaton, jr., at Grand Junction, Tenn.

One Regiment of Infantry from Brigadier-General McArthur's Division will be temporarily detailed as guard, in charge of such contrabands, and the Surgeons of said Regiment will be charged with the care of the sick.

Commissaries of Subsistence will issue on the requisitions of Chaplain J. Eaton, jr., omitting the coffee rations and substituting rye.

By order of MAJ.-GEN. U. S. GRANT.

(Signed) JNO. A. RAWLINS,
Ass't Adj't-Gen'l.

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The necessity of handling, for the convenience of the colored people, property belonging to the army, made essential some regulation covering supplies other than the food already provided for, and the following order was issued by General Grant. I quote the order in evidence of the thoroughness with which Grant did his best to secure the necessary aid for the contrabands. He was acting in all this, it must be remembered, solely upon his own responsibility; whether or not the Government would sustain him was problematical; that he would encounter great opposition from the army was certain.

HEADQUARTERS 13TH ARMY CORPS,
DEPARTMENT OF THE TENNESSEE,
SPECIAL ORDERS, LA GRANGE, TENN., NOV. 17, 1862.
NO. 21.

Lieut.-Col. Charles A. Reynolds, Chief Quartermaster of the Department, will furnish Chaplain J. Eaton, jr., in charge of Contrabands at Grand Junction, Tenn., on his requisition, such tools and other implements as he may require; also materials for baling cotton, and clothing for contraband men, women, and children. Unsalable soldiers' clothing will also be issued to him.

By order of GENERAL U. S. GRANT.

(Signed) JNO. A. RAWLINS,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

These orders facilitated somewhat a very complicated task. Had the cabal against Grant succeeded, however, he could have been made liable for hundreds of thousands of dollars on account of the supplies — condemned tents, soldiers' clothing, etc., — which he ordered turned over for the benefit of the contrabands. Long after the events of which I write, when the General and I were recalling those days, he said to me, "I wonder if you ever realized how

easily they could have had our heads!" I had often enough had cause to wonder if *he* had ever realized this, but my responsibilities were slight compared with those assumed by him.

The care of the sick had been especially troubling me, and the specific regulation placing them in charge of the army surgeons was a relief to my mind. The soldiers of our army were a good deal opposed to serving the Negro in any manner, and the duty of guarding the contraband camps and protecting them against possible violence was not performed with any too much willingness. In this antagonism to the Negro in his new relationship of ward of the army, the soldiers too often followed the example set by the attitude of the officers themselves. To undertake any form of work for the contrabands, at that time, was to be forsaken by one's friends and to pass under a cloud.

The question of obtaining suitable assistants under these circumstances loomed large on the horizon, and my own lack of commanding rank was, as I had foreseen, a distinct obstacle. I recall a rather dramatic incident illustrating this, and also indicative of General Grant's methods of handling complications.

Groups of Negroes were constantly coming within or near our lines, and it was my duty to see that these people were brought as promptly as possible under the supervision now provided for them. One morning I found such a group, who, with their mules, were wandering aimlessly about, and just as I was directing them to the contraband camp a Colonel rode up to me, and speaking somewhat roughly and abruptly, ordered me to halt. I recognized

this officer at once as a brave soldier, well known in the army and a favorite with General Grant. I attempted to tell him that I was acting according to orders, when he notified me that he was provost-marshal of the village and must be obeyed. I found myself practically under arrest, but I replied that there seemed to be a conflict in orders, and asked him if he would lead the way to General Grant and get his solution of the difficulty. This he was nothing loathe to do, and evidently felt a good deal of assurance as to the outcome of the interview. The General received us kindly and listened to the statement of the case from the Colonel's point of view, I meanwhile standing meekly by. At the conclusion of the little narrative the General said quietly, "Chaplain Eaton is carrying out my orders, Colonel, and they must be obeyed." The Colonel and I retired, he to continue in the execution of his provost-marshal duties, I to rejoin my little band of Negroes and conduct them into camp. I remembered the General's promise to take care of me, and realized now more fully than ever before how absolutely it was to be relied upon.

The time came at last for the forward movement of headquarters. General Grant moved to Oxford, Mississippi, the site of the State University, and I was left to get along as best I could without the privilege of daily consultation with my chief.

The camp at Grand Junction by that time had assumed some order, and gave promise of achieving better things. Squads of colored men and women under the protection of soldiers began to go out into the deserted fields of the Confederate planters and gather the crops of corn and cotton. Whenever feasible, my assistants made definite

bargains with the Negroes for picking, ginning, and baling the cotton, which was then passed on to the quartermaster's department. This department negotiated the sales, and turned over the funds to the United States Treasury. In addition to overseeing the work on plantations abandoned by the rebels, it came somewhat gradually to be the duty of my assistants and myself to adjust equitable relations between Confederate planters and the Negroes. On this phase of the situation I shall have more to say later. The Emancipation Proclamation did not go into effect formally until January 1, 1863, but already, in the late fall of the preceding year, the notion that the Negro was a free agent had penetrated with the advance of our armies into the South, and in the territory controlled by the Union forces it became our policy to exercise a certain surveillance over the plantations still operated by Confederates, and whenever possible to put the Negro on the basis of a paid laborer. Such surveillance as a matter of fact grew naturally out of the situation, for the Negroes who fled from the plantations put themselves under the protection of our armies, thus forcing the planters either to give up their agricultural operations or secure the labor of the Negroes under conditions devised and as far as possible maintained by the Union forces. A good deal of friction resulted, some of which assumed a somewhat personal character.

We were in the habit of sending out foraging parties to aid in supplying the contraband camps, and I remember that, on one occasion, the sergeant in charge was mounted upon my own horse. This horse had become well known in the neighborhood, and was conspicuously marked with

a white spot on the forehead. On the morning of which I write, while I was safe in quarters, a shot was fired which killed my horse. The sergeant who was riding him escaped unharmed, but the soldiers understood that the man who fired intended to have killed me.

Very complicated questions arose in my relationship with the people in and about Grand Junction, and it was hardly reasonable to hope for a settlement that should not antagonize some one. In the midst of these difficulties it became essential that I should consult with General Grant. Hence I betook myself to Oxford with a batch of difficulties involving questions of discrimination between this and that planter. It was sometimes difficult to know whether these men were Southern or Union sympathizers, but the question was one of great importance, as upon it depended the status of their slaves. Grant, from his greater knowledge of the locality and the sympathies of the people, was often able to advise and direct me. While some employers were ready to take the oath of allegiance at once, others were inclined to temporize, or betrayed far greater willingness to take the oath on the other side.

Grant, meanwhile, had been pushing forward his plans for the Vicksburg campaign. The base of supplies for the army had been moved forward to Holly Springs, and after my arrival at Oxford there were rumors of some disaster on the line. My principal business with the General was finished, and I was sitting beside him in the front door of the house in which his headquarters were located, when an early morning telegram was brought him giving detailed confirmation of the Holly Springs disaster of the night before. Much as it meant to him — the reversal

of all his plans for his movement on Vicksburg — there was on his face no sign of disturbance that I could see, save a slight twitching of his mustache. He told me very quietly and dispassionately — referring to the despatch and Murphy's surrender of Holly Springs — that the night before he had telegraphed Colonel Murphy warning him of Van Dorn's approach and directing him to be on guard at every point. He had since been informed that Murphy was engaged at the time in some form of conviviality and let the warning pass unheeded. The loss of the supplies was then considered a great blow to the army, and necessitated an immediate withdrawal and reorganization of all General Grant's plans. In spite of his calmness, he felt it acutely, and remarked to me, "Many people will believe that I was taken unawares and did nothing to protect my supplies, whereas I did all that was possible."

In the midst of this disturbance he was ready, as always, to listen to what I had still to say concerning the work assigned me, and he had previously found time to relieve my embarrassment at Grand Junction by still further extending my power in the following general order:

HEADQUARTERS 13TH ARMY CORPS,

DEPARTMENT OF THE TENNESSEE,

General Orders,

OXFORD, MISS., 17th Dec., 1862.

No. 13.

Chaplain John Eaton, jr., of the 27th Regiment Ohio Volunteers, is hereby appointed General Superintendent of Contrabands for the Department.

He will designate such Assistant Superintendents as may be necessary for the proper care of these people, who will be detailed for their duty by the Post or District Commander.

All Assistant Superintendents will be subject to the orders of the Superintendent.

It will be the duty of the Superintendent of Contrabands to organize them into working parties in saving cotton, as pioneers on railroads and steamboats, and in any way where their service can be made available.

Where labor is performed for private individuals, they will be charged in accordance with the tariff fixed in previous orders.

When abandoned crops of cotton are saved for the benefit of Government, the officer selling the same will turn over to the Superintendent of Contrabands the same amount charged individuals.

The negroes will be clothed, and in every way provided for, out of their earnings so far as practicable, the account being kept of all earnings and expenditures, and subject to the inspection of the Inspector General of the Department when called for.

Such detail of men as may be necessary for the care and superintendence of the contrabands will be made by Post or Division Commander on application of the Superintendent; as far as practicable such men as are not fit for active field duty will be detailed.

The Superintendent will take charge of all contributions of clothing, etc., for the benefit of negroes and distribute the same.

All applications for the service of contrabands will be made on the General Superintendent, who will furnish such labor from negroes who voluntarily come within the lines of the army.

In no case will negroes be forced into the service of the Government, or be enticed away from their homes except when it becomes a military necessity.

By order of Major-Gen. U. S. GRANT.

(Signed) JNO. A. RAWLINS,
A. A.-G.

It may be inferred from this order that one phase of the complications that had brought me to Oxford had been the difficulty of procuring the proper assistants in my work. The contempt in which all service on behalf of the blacks was held by the army had made it impossible for me to secure the detail of any but common soldiers, or at the most of sergeants, and I was therefore relieved from

an unpleasant situation by the terms of the order. It should be stated at once that the chaplains formed an honorable exception to those who were out of sympathy with the Negro work, and many of my most valuable assistants were drawn from their ranks. There were police duties and obligations connected with the handling of property, however, which they were not fitted by training to perform, and for which the services of the line officers were badly needed.

Owing to the Holly Springs disaster, which was far-reaching in its effects, the military and contraband camps at Grand Junction were ordered to withdraw to Memphis. Accordingly I returned to Grand Junction with the prospect before me of moving the army of contrabands westward to the city of Memphis,—where, by the way, the anti-Union element was particularly strong.

General Grant's father and Mrs. Grant, who were with him at Oxford, left with me on the same train. The General's father came with me to Grand Junction and stopped at my headquarters there. He was full of anecdote about his son, and delighted me with the freedom with which he talked of him and showed his pride in the General's achievements. The elder Grant came to the scene of war with the traditions of the Galena leather business still upon him, and the waste of the hides along the route of the army at the slaughter camps filled him with dismay. He confided to me, however, that his son would not permit him to make use of them in any way, declining to have them become a source of profit to any one with whom he was connected.

The stories of Grant's early life as his father told them

to me were especially interesting. He spoke of his son's life in the West, — his service in the Mexican War and in Oregon, and of his fruitless efforts to secure even a humble military appointment by writing to General McClellan, General L. Thomas, and other officers of rank at the outbreak of the war. He spoke especially of the value of Grant's services in the office of the Adjutant-General of the State of Illinois, where his familiarity with every military form soon began to tell in his favor. Papers dealing with the affairs of every department were brought to him, — the quartermaster's, the commissary, and the medical. He was constantly applied to for advice and assistance. When he finally received his commission, there were those in the 21st Illinois — so his father told me — who, when they first saw the new colonel, did not think he would "do," but these soon had occasion to change their minds. Grant instead of following the almost universal custom of putting his command on board cars for the point to which his order should take him, showed his practical grasp of the situation by at once marching his men across the country, part way to Mexico, Missouri, their ultimate destination, thus giving them the advantage of just so much training under conditions calculated not to overtax their endurance. These details of Grant's life as told me by his father were new to me then, and of so much interest that I was full of regret when the old gentleman left me to return to the North.

CHAPTER IV

Falling back upon Memphis. Conditions among the contrabands. A comprehensive wedding. A prayer for "Jeff." Davis. White and colored refugees cared for and sent North. Gossip about Grant. He assumes command of the movement on Vicksburg. His care for his subordinates.

THE main avenue for the retreat of the army from Grand Junction to Memphis was over the Memphis and Charleston railroad, though wagon transportation was also made available. I at once secured free transportation by rail for the contrabands. The troops were moved as far as possible in company or regimental groups and in accordance with their rank, but in addition to this each train carried crowds of contrabands whom it was impossible either to organize or control. Their terror of being left behind made them swarm over the passenger and freight cars, clinging to every available space and even crouching on the roofs. The trains were moved very slowly and with the utmost caution, but even so the exposure of these people — men, women, and children — was indescribable. Upon our arrival in the city as many of the contrabands as we had been able to provide for were taken to homes where shelter and employment were given them. Our first and leading aim in all our efforts on behalf of the Negro was to put every colored person at work where his or her labor was needed and would bring

the best results; but in a condition governed by military necessity, such as ruled us in our retreat to Memphis, it was simply impossible to make provision for this army of destitute and unfortunate people. To make matters worse, the night came on cold, there was a light fall of snow, and at every street corner little bonfires had been kindled, around which groups of shivering Negroes were huddled. The city was thus exposed to the danger of conflagration, though fortunately nothing serious resulted. I had foreseen the necessity of relieving the congestion, and already a camp had been begun just below Memphis to which, as soon as possible, large numbers of contrabands were withdrawn.

My work was carried on mainly in the still unoccupied regions around Memphis and the points held by our troops on the railroads in the rear of the city. Gradually the army settled down once more. It was distributed in different directions from Memphis,—especially along the route of the Memphis and Charleston railroad as far as Corinth, where there was a considerable force assembled under General Grenville M. Dodge. The contrabands at this point were so numerous that a separate camp had been established for them a few days after the issuance of the order assigning me to duty at Grand Junction. This camp at Corinth was admirably organized by General Dodge.

During the early days in Memphis I had ample opportunity for observing that the suffering of the Negroes had already quickened into active service the kind heart of A. S. Fiske, Chaplain of the 4th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, and I obtained from General Grant the necessary order to have him report to me. He proved invaluable

as an efficient and sympathetic worker, and as new camps were constantly forming all over the Department demanding my presence in various places at short intervals of time, in January, 1863, I assigned Mr. Fiske — now Dr. Fiske — to the important post of Memphis as Superintendent of the colored people there.

Of Camp Fiske — the principal settlement for contrabands in the Memphis district — Mr. James Yeatman said in his report for 1864 to the Western Sanitary Commission, of which he was president: "The location is a most excellent one, dry and airy and easily drained. The encampment consists of four rows of good log huts, two rows on either side of a parallelogram, with small plots for gardens in front. The streets and alleys were all clean and well swept, having good drainage and excellent police arrangements. The inmates were generally well clothed, and were cheerful and contented."

The feeling against serving the Negro in any capacity still prevailed among the officers of our troops, and even armed as I was with the order issued by General Grant at Oxford, it was exceedingly difficult to find men adapted to the task. To get a man who could be kind to the Negro and just to the Negro's master was all but impossible. It required a type of firmness that every man did not possess, and I had to look about me with the utmost care to select from the troops men of character whose services would be willingly offered and capably administered. We were making a difficult experiment in the interests of humanity, and it was essential that we should acquit ourselves creditably in the eyes of those who watched and criticised our efforts.

While still with my old regiment, I used to have, of course, exceptional opportunities for observing the calibre of the men, and in my capacity as tent-mate and old friend of Colonel Fuller, he and I used to discuss together the question of promotions from among the younger officers. We found ourselves agreeing upon Lieutenant Samuel Thomas, Company H, 27th Ohio, as the most promising young man in that rank, and accordingly he was recommended for promotion and appointed. My mind naturally turned to this young man when I found myself in need of officers whose training had fitted them for the care of property. I believed he would devote himself with willingness to the Negro cause. I therefore asked for his detail, and he was ordered to report to me. He was one of the most devoted of all my officers, and soon became my Assistant General Superintendent.

The service in which my assistants were engaged was a peculiar one; the officers were expected to obey all military regulations, and at the same time to stand as mediators between the townspeople or planters, as the case might be, and also between the contrabands and the army. The usual responsibility of maintaining order — the police duty of the army — was in the hands of the regular officers, — the provost-marshals; but if any special complications arose involving the affairs of the colored people, the matter was at once taken to one of my assistants, and received special consideration and adjudication under military rules. The problems confronting us were full of difficulty and have never been adequately described. Theoretically the task before us seemed impossible of achievement, yet after a fashion, with many drawbacks and much incompleteness,

it was achieved. To make the Negro a consciously self-supporting unit in the society in which he found himself, and start him on the way to self-respecting citizenship, — that was the beginning and the end of all our efforts. We did all in our power to show him how his industry contributed directly to his own comfort. Formerly he had been responsible to his owner; now as a freedman he was responsible to the Government, whose agents, vested with the military authority which the situation demanded, became the immediate channels through which he received his first conceptions of the privileges and obligations which his new-found freedom conferred. All were vigorously encouraged to work, and the number of those dependent upon the bounty of the Government was reduced as far as possible. As many as could, retained their places in families and shops and in every form of industry which had previously engaged them. Their welfare under these circumstances remained the charge of my assistants and myself. The inviolability of contracts was rigorously enforced, and both employer and employed were led to recognize, in so far as this could be made apparent to them, the readjustment of their relations.

Among those who had no other home or shelter than that provided by our efforts, we enforced to the utmost of our ability every condition conducive to good order. There was no promiscuous intermingling. Families were established by themselves. Every man took care of his own wife and children. One of the most touching features of our work was the eagerness with which colored men and women availed themselves of the opportunities offered them to legalize unions already formed, some of which

had been in existence for a long time. Chaplain Fiske on one occasion married in about one hour one hundred and nineteen couples at one service, — chiefly those who had lived long together. Later, most of the marriages were new contracts. This comprehensive wedding greatly impressed the freedmen, who, after celebrating with a sumptuous wedding-breakfast, dispersed in couples to their newly prepared cabins. All the more permanent camps reported that the enforcement of strict marriage regulations produced excellent results in the morale and general conduct of the people.

The number of colored preachers and exhorters who were to be found in the community was amazing. How far their services were of value to the Negroes it would be difficult to state, but they figured in some very picturesque and amusing scenes. My assistant, Chaplain Fiske, and I were returning into the city one night after having located the site and provided for the building of some cabins outside of Memphis, when we came upon a group of Negroes — new arrivals — conducting a burial service. The minister was praying fervently for the survivors, and according to the universal custom in the South, a prayer was offered for Jefferson Davis. Evidently the preacher felt that since his arrival upon Yankee territory a little more license was permissible in the form which the prayer should take. Accordingly this was the prayer which we overheard: "O Lord, shake Jeff. Davis ober de mouf ob Hell, but O Lord, doan' drap him in!"

Among the Negroes at Camp Fiske was a minister who, to the disgrace of his profession, and in spite of the danger of corrupting his neighbors, persisted in living with a

woman not his wife. Chaplain Fiske, who tells the story, labored with him to make him see the error of his ways, but the minister evidently felt that his own standing with the Almighty made any outside intervention superfluous. "No, sah," he would reply to the Chaplain's protests, "No, sah, I 'se pra'd and I 'se pra'd, and de Lord done give me no call for to change." Finding that neither offers to secure transportation for the man's own wife, whose whereabouts were known to Mr. Fiske, nor appeals to the standards of conventional morality had any effect upon the transgressor, the Chaplain finally told him that since he would not live in accordance with the code which was binding upon the rest of the community he must leave the settlement and not imperil others by his example. He and the woman departed most unwillingly, and soon afterwards both fell victims to the smallpox and died. Their fate was looked upon by the Negroes as a direct and swift application of retributive justice, and so salutary was the effect that no other apostles of the doctrine of free love disturbed the settlement's morality.

Fortunately for the success of our labors among the colored people, the benevolent workers at the North began to respond with great generosity to the needs of the destitute refugees. In addition to the large amounts of money and clothing which were gathered by various societies and individuals in increasing quantities and of which I shall have more to say in due time, one of the most encouraging and helpful elements in our work was the arrival of devoted men and women who now began to come in, offering their services as teachers, or in any form of practical philanthropy which should prove most needed.

Delicate and educated women of the best families sacrificed all the comfort and refinement of their homes, and devoted themselves under the most untoward circumstances to the work of improving the condition of the Negro. Missionary societies, as is well known, were among the first to enter the field.

The scope of our work was greatly enlarged by the arrival of white refugees, — a movement which later assumed very large proportions. As time went on Cairo became the centre of our activities in this direction. It was the most northerly of any of our camps, and served as the portal through which thousands of poor whites and Negroes were sent into the loyal States as fast as opportunities offered for providing them with homes and employment. Many of these became permanent residents; some were sent home by Union soldiers to carry on the work in the shop or on the farm which the war had interrupted. It became necessary to have a superintendent at Cairo and facilities for organizing the bands of refugees who were sent North by the army. There was an increasing demand for work. Many white people had been driven from their homes by the circumstances of the war, and large numbers of them asked for nothing better than the opportunity to work. They needed simply to be guided and forwarded in their purposes; others not disposed to work, but rather to live by hook or by crook, were kept under military surveillance and guided authoritatively toward some definite means of self-support. The number thus transferred from the disturbed condition of war to the condition of comparative peace and prosperity in the northern States was very large, and the educational

influence of the change was noticeable and most important. Frequently a family or group that had been observed in the transit North, destitute of almost everything in the way of aids to industry, was observed by myself or my assistants returning South, after perhaps a year's absence, to the neighborhood of their former homes, bringing with them household or farming equipments, a cow, or a horse and wagon, or some other means of adding to their prosperity and the rehabilitation of their lives. Mother wit and an increasing desire to help themselves had begun to count, and the transformation effected unconsciously through living in the midst of the industries of the North was really very great. They had made the discovery that the possession of a vast property and the ownership of slaves — contrary to a prevailing notion which was at least partly responsible for the existence of the poor whites as a class — was not essential either to self-respect or to social standing. This type of white refugee was often without any political bias and took sides with whatever faction could give him the best assurance of material comfort. Thus Mr. Lincoln's anxiety to keep the feeling of the border States favorable to the Union was somewhat sustained by our efforts on behalf of the poor whites, among whom a distinctly better order was in many cases established. Children began to go to school, and farmers to work the crops on new methods, so that even before the war was over not a few of the returning refugees found themselves in greatly improved conditions and alive to a new political and social situation.

Edgar Gardner Murphy, one of the keenest and most thoughtful of recent writers on Southern problems — and

himself a Southerner — while justly deprecating the illegitimate democracy which Federal measures of reconstruction too often “nailed on from outside,” has this to say of the true democratization of Southern life: “The political reorganization which was proceeding was all the more difficult because the South was just entering, by pain and sacrifice, into the crucial movement of the century. The historian of institutions must perceive that the real struggle of the South from the date of Lee’s surrender — through all the accidents of political and industrial revolution — was simply a struggle toward the creation of democratic conditions. The *real* thing, in the unfolding of the later South, is the arrival of the common man.”¹ Many factors entered into the preparation of the people for this “real struggle of the South,” and not the least important of these factors were the contact and influences of social and educational standards in a measure alien, and necessarily alien, to the aristocratic ideal of the older Southern order.

Records of this transformation were kept as fully as possible, but the task of keeping records was usually added to some serious responsibility of another character, and hence was necessarily inadequate in its performance. The number of white and colored refugees sent North by General Steele from Arkansas alone was very large indeed. The former were transported to escape the Southern draft.

Meanwhile, during the early Memphis period, I was in very close daily contact with General Grant and was given ample opportunity to come to know him thoroughly, — if further opportunity were needed.

About this time a young man — a dentist by profession

¹ Murphy, *Problems of the Present South*, p. 12.

— came down from Cincinnati to work with one of the sanitary commissions, and announced his intention of helping the Union cause in any way he could. As a means of insuring his safety, it had been recommended that he should share my quarters. Incidentally he interested himself in making a close study of General Grant. There was much surmise at that time as to what manner of man Grant was. Many eyes were upon him, and to not a few of the on-lookers he appeared quite incomprehensible. This particular observer had come from a hotbed of criticism where stories of Grant's intemperance and general incompetence were numerous. One night, after he had been observing Grant for some time, he said to me, "Until to-day I was pretty well satisfied that he was all right, but to-night I tell you it's all up with the General. I have seen signs of the very worst." I naturally inquired for his evidence. He said he had met the General that morning on the street going to his office, and that his face had looked mottled, like that of a man who had been drinking the night before. I was in the habit of talking quite freely with this young fellow; his loyalty was past suspicion, and he was fairly well informed as a rule of my movements. I therefore asked him if he remembered that I had been out unusually late the night before. He said that he did. "Well," said I, "I came directly from Grant's quarters here. I had questions to ask which needed his immediate attention, and I ventured to go to his private quarters. I found him with his head and neck all swathed in hot poultices, which his wife was applying in order to relieve the violent sick headache from which he was suffering and to which he was subject. That was the dissipation in

which he was indulging." This information quite changed the young man's opinion, and it meant a great deal to me to be able to correct the impression he had received. Long years afterward, when the General had died, a New York paper printed an interview with General Frederick Grant in which some indirect but corroborative testimony appears. I quote from this interview as follows:

"My father cared nothing for show of any kind, and even public receptions were distasteful to him. He always tried to avoid them and was happiest in the home circle. Not that he did not appreciate the public indorsement of what he had done, — this always gave him pleasure, and it was only for the sake of this that he was willing to be made an exhibition of so often. Besides, he was liable to become embarrassed. People used to think that he had a florid complexion, but his complexion really was pale, and his skin was delicate as that of a young girl. I never saw a man with a skin so delicate . . . but as soon as he appeared in public or was ushered into the society of strangers his embarrassment caused his face to flush."

In my judgment many of the stories of Grant's intemperance had no better foundation than some such impression as that received by the young dentist, who became, after the episode I have just related, one of the General's greatest admirers.

During the early part of the Memphis period General Grant established his headquarters in the town, and I had the inestimable advantage of free access to him in all questions of difficulty. He and Mrs. Grant had rooms at the Gayoso House, but the official headquarters were established in one of the banks, where a suite of offices was secured for General Rawlins and his clerks. After General Grant had expressed his opinion upon any specific case

which I had brought to his notice, and had directed me what to do, I was able to feel that a policy had been established for my guidance in other circumstances of which that case was typical.

The winter of 1862-3 closed one of the most trying periods of the war, and there was a good deal of cause for discouragement. The Holly Springs disaster was a disturbing factor in itself, upsetting as it did Grant's early plans for the movement on Vicksburg, and, in addition to that, the Nation was much distressed by the failure of Sherman's expedition at the mouth of the Yazoo River, which was intended to support the same movement on Vicksburg, which the losses at Holly Springs completely prevented. The circumstances of the failure were quite beyond Sherman's control, but it demonstrated very fully what a difficult proposition Vicksburg was certain to be. Another source of anxiety to those of us who had become devoted to Grant's interests and who believed that he was destined to prove our greatest bulwark against the military power of the enemy, was the fact of the open criticism to which he was subjected even in our own ranks. Those who had political affiliations with General McClelland were loud in his praises, and equally outspoken in their disapprobation of Grant. For Grant himself the preceding months had probably proved the most difficult he had yet been called upon to face, and the temperate references which he makes to the period in his "Memoirs" speak volumes in favor of his dignity and his freedom from ill-will toward those who had made him suffer. During the farcical campaign about Corinth conducted by General Halleck, when Grant was practically without a command, and when

all his suggestions were apparently received with contemptuous disapproval by the Commanding General, he made several applications to be transferred to another field of operations, and mentions this fact himself in his "Memoirs." Adjutant-General Rawlins, who was one of Grant's most devoted friends, afterwards told me that Grant had even gone so far as to write out his resignation, and had directed Rawlins to forward it to Washington, but that he, Rawlins, had "never seen the time when he felt it ought to go," and had managed to hold it over until the situation righted itself. After the departure of General Halleck to Washington to serve as Commander-in-Chief, the inefficiency of General McClelland remained a great source of anxiety, complicated, as I have already pointed out, by the fact that the McClelland faction was not slow in expressing its disapprobation of General Grant. I was in a position to hear so much of this sort of criticism that I brought it to the notice of General Rawlins, who conveyed it to Grant himself. Grant evidently determined upon some decisive action to clear the atmosphere, and having received authority for the move from Washington, he sent all of the Union forces to Young's Point under McClelland, — leaving only enough troops behind to protect the country south of Cairo, — and on the thirtieth of January himself took command preparatory to the movement on Vicksburg. Grant states in his "Memoirs" that he wished to put Sherman in command of these forces, but could not do otherwise than take command himself, as McClelland was the senior of all the other generals in the Department.

Some time after Grant's departure I was obliged to fol-

low him down the river to consult with him and receive his further directions. I found him with his headquarters on a river boat above Vicksburg. He was exerting himself at the time to devise means of approaching or surrounding the city, and among other efforts the attempt was then being made to widen and deepen a canal already cut under General Williams's supervision, from the neighborhood of Young's Point to the river below, in order to make this waterway navigable for our transports and gunboats, the hope being thus to evade the most destructive of the batteries defending Vicksburg against our approach. Grant, as he says in his "Memoirs," never had much faith in the success of the scheme, but he set four thousand men at work upon it — mostly Negroes — until the enemy established a new series of batteries which effectually put a stop to this particular enterprise. I refer to it because on my arrival Grant requested me to make a careful observation of the conditions provided for the comfort of the Negroes engaged on the work. I found them fairly well supplied with food and blankets, and so reported the matter to General Grant. The incident has always remained with me as one more illustration of the fact that Grant was never too anxious, never too preoccupied with the great problems that beset him, to take a sincere and humane interest in the welfare of the most subordinate laborer dependent upon him.

One cannot properly appreciate an incident of that sort, unless it be borne in mind that comparatively few of those in authority cared for the welfare of their subordinates, — especially if the subordinate happened to be a Negro. I remember on one occasion, for instance, meeting Governor Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, and filled with

enthusiasm as I was for our work among the freedmen, I talked with him quite fully of the important work I supposed him to be engaged with preparatory to the future prosperity of the reconstructed State. Johnson, it will be remembered, was fond of referring to himself as the "Tribune of the people," but when I spoke of the opportunity for establishing schools and organizing new industries for farmers and mechanics, he was quite obviously bored, and all that might have been said on the subject had no more inclination to stay by him than has water to stay on a duck's back. After experiences with men of this type there was no room for doubt as to the value and rarity of Grant's sympathy and foresight.

CHAPTER V

The policy of the Nation toward the Negro. Fugitive slaves and military commanders. Arming the Negro. Arrival of Adjutant-General L. Thomas in the Mississippi Valley. The organization there of colored regiments. The beginnings of the lessee system.

IN order to place the work which we carried on in the Department of the Tennessee in its proper relation to the general subject of the Negro and the Government, it seems advisable to turn back at this point and review for a moment the policy of the Union toward the black refugees — in so far as the Nation may be said to have had a policy at that time — and to see how the question was treated by the commanders of the Union forces.

I have already alluded to Butler's use of the term "contraband" in reference to the slaves of those in rebellion against the Government. It will at once be recalled that during Butler's command of the forces at Fortress Monroe, three fugitive slaves were received into the Union lines. Upon learning that they were to have been employed by their masters in building rebel fortifications, Butler exclaimed, "These men are contraband of war; set them at work." The words were in a sense a forecast of the policy which later prevailed wherever the Union army exercised any supervision over the Negro. In fact, Butler worked out among the freedmen at Fortress Monroe

a system which presented most of the essential features of the subsequent efforts in their behalf; that is to say, he gave them employment on a wage basis, caused army rations to be issued to the destitute, and provided for the needs of the non-laborers out of the earnings of the laborers. These efforts were inaugurated in May, 1861, and General Butler's policy was an honorable exception to that of many of the commanders. It was ably carried on by General Wood, who succeeded Butler in the Department of Virginia, and by General Banks, who carried out the work begun by General Butler at New Orleans.

The efforts of E. L. Pierce, of the Treasury Department at Port Royal in the fall of 1861, and the yet more successful work carried on in South Carolina — especially on the Sea Islands, of which he was Military Governor — by General Rufus Saxton, Pierce's successor, under definite instructions from the Secretary of War, were, however, by far the most elaborate and the most productive of good results of any of these first efforts for the relief, employment, and education of the contrabands.¹

In the West, General Halleck, in his famous Order No. 3,

¹ For outlines of this experimental period see W. E. Burghart Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Essays and Sketches, pp. 13-40 (this essay also covers the period of the Freedmen's Bureau); George W. Williams, *A History of Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion*, pp. 67-80; *The Freedmen's Bureau — A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction*, Paul Skeels Peirce, University of Iowa Studies, Vol. III, No. I, pp. 1-33. For a special study of General Saxton's work, see also *Common Schools in the South from 1861 to 1876*, by A. D. Mayo (Chapter XI of the Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1900-01), pp. 416-424; Major-General O. O. Howard, *Autobiography*, Part III, *Reconstruction*, Chapter XLVI. (The references here and elsewhere to General Howard's forthcoming *Autobiography* are made possible by the courtesy of General Howard and his publishers, the Baker and Taylor Co.); E. W. Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal*.

issued November, 1861, expressly excluded fugitive slaves from the Union lines within his department. General Dix, on taking possession of Accomac and Northampton in Virginia, followed the same policy of denying the colored refugees the privilege of coming into his lines. Among those commanders who received the fugitives at all, the majority permitted Confederate "slave hunters" to enter the Union lines and carry off their slaves upon identification. General McCook and General Johnson were especially commended by a Confederate newspaper correspondent for courtesies extended to a slave hunter within their lines. The Confiscation Act of August, 1861, which provided for the confiscation of property used for insurrectionary purposes, was so little regarded by commanders in the field, that at least two officers were deprived of their commands for attempting to act in accordance with it. Colonel H. E. Paine of the 4th Wisconsin, Department of the Gulf, protested against orders to turn all fugitive slaves out of the lines, as "a violation of law for the purpose of returning fugitive slaves," and was relieved of his command in consequence. Lieutenant-Colonel D. R. Anthony, commanding the 7th Kansas in Tennessee, suffered the same fate for declaring the slave hunters a nuisance and taking measures to protect himself against them.¹ Grant, on the other hand, in an order issued from Fort Donelson, February 26, 1862, while admitting the necessity for obedience to Halleck's Order No. 3, distinctly states that no permits will be granted citizens to pass through the camps in search of fugitive slaves, and provides further that all slaves within the Union lines at

¹ H. Greeley, *American Conflict*, Vol. II, pp. 241-246.

the time of the capture of Donelson who had been "used by the enemy in building fortifications, or in any manner hostile to the Government, will be employed by the quartermaster's department for the benefit of the Government, and will under no circumstances be permitted to return to their masters."

The Union was committed by the action of Congress and the official utterances of the Administration to a support of the policy of receiving within the Union lines and withholding from the enemy the slaves of those in rebellion against the Government. The Government had indeed committed itself yet further. As pointed out by Mr. T. D. Eliot in a speech on the Freedmen's Bureau, delivered February, 1864, in the House of Representatives,¹ the Act of June, 1862, providing for the collection of taxes in insurrectionary districts, empowered the tax commissioners to lease abandoned lands on terms which should secure proper and reasonable employment and support at wages or on shares to persons and families residing on the lands. This, I believe, was the first notice taken by legislation of the freedmen, save such as referred to questions of military expediency, and it practically recognized the destitute Negro as in some sense a ward of the Government. It also brought the civil arm of the Government into unavoidable conflict with the military supervision of Negro affairs, and so led, as reported by General Saxton, to sad complications in his plans for the Negroes under him.² This was but another illustration of the fatal error

¹ Cong. Globe, 38th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 567-573.

² Report of Gen. Rufus Saxton, War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 111, Vol. IV, pp. 1022-1031.

of introducing into the same field two agencies with imperfectly differentiated functions, — an error from which our work in the Mississippi Valley likewise suffered.¹

To return from this digression to the question of the reception and detention of slaves within the Union lines. Early in the war, Lincoln, while repudiating and suppressing the more unguarded and emotional statements made by Secretary of War Cameron in his Annual Report of December 1, 1861, inserted in the same report a brief sentence urging the military necessity of withholding fugitive slaves from the enemy, — a course which in his wisdom he realized would have “no tendency to induce the horrors of insurrection even in the Rebel communities.” Even so early Cameron — in that portion of the report suppressed by the President — had advocated arming the Negroes for the defence of the Union.² No vigorous enforcement, however, of the policy of treating slaves as contraband of war was attempted, owing without doubt to the extreme intricacy of the situation, and to the importance — ever present in Mr. Lincoln’s mind — of preserving the sympathy of the Union slaveholders in the border States. Butler’s efforts in behalf of the Negro had been commended, but it depended upon the common sense of the individual commanders whether such efforts called forth commendation or rebuke.

A new Article of War, created by Act of Congress, and approved March 13, 1862, tended materially to protect the slaves against the claims of their pursuers. By the terms of this Article all persons in the military service were pro-

¹ See Chapter XII.

² Greeley, *American Conflict*, Vol. II, p. 242.

hibited, on pain of dismissal from the service, from employing the forces at their command to aid in returning slaves to those claiming to be their owners. Gradually, as events progressed, there was a change in the attitude of the Government, which is well expressed in an unofficial letter from Halleck to Grant dated March 31, 1863. Referring to the policy of the Government of withdrawing the Negro from the Confederate territory as a means of crippling the productive capacity of the enemy, and the further efforts that were to be undertaken to render him actively efficient as a soldier, Halleck wrote: "The character of the war has very much changed within the last year. There is now no possible hope of reconciliation with the rebels. . . . There can be no peace but that which is forced by the sword." Halleck then urged Grant as a "friend" to see to it that his officers exerted themselves in sympathetic co-operation with the efforts of the Government to use the Negro as a laborer — Halleck's letter was written six months after Grant's order issued to me at Grand Junction — and as a soldier.¹

This brings us to the consideration of how the policy of arming the Negro originated. Aside from an effort made by the Confederacy to arm the free Negroes of Memphis, which in spite of its success was not followed up, the first Negro regiment to be organized in the Civil War was recruited under orders issued by General David Hunter, commanding the Department of the South at Port Royal, South Carolina, in May, 1862. It was known as the 1st South Carolina Volunteer Regiment. In a delightfully

¹ G. W. Williams: *A History of Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion*, pp. 106-108.

impertinent and ironical letter,¹ nominally addressed to the Adjutant-General of the army but intended for the enlightenment of his own fiercest critic, Representative Wickliffe of Kentucky, Hunter claimed to have acted under instructions empowering him to enlist all "loyal persons"; but his policy was untimely, the regiment was not sustained by the Government, and in default of funds with which to pay the men, it was necessarily disbanded. Early in August of the same year Governor Sprague of Rhode Island issued a call to the free Negroes of the State, — the first call for colored troops to be issued at the North. Later in the month General Butler issued an appeal to the free Negroes of New Orleans, which resulted in the mustering of a full regiment on September 27. The first definite executive action to be taken by the United States Government was, however, an order issued by the Secretary of War in August, 1862, to General Saxton, who succeeded Hunter at Port Royal in the control of Negro affairs, directing the enlistment of colored troops with the same pay, rations, and equipment allotted white volunteers. Congress had authorized the enlistment of colored troops only a month before. The order of the Secretary of War also directed General Saxton to occupy plantations, harvest crops, and otherwise administer affairs for the improvement of property. General Ullman's important work in the Department of the Gulf was begun under authority of the War Department early in January, 1863. He had previously been active in interesting President Lincoln in the question of recruiting Negro regiments.

From this very fragmentary outline of the early attempts

¹ Greeley: *American Conflict*, Vol. II, p. 515.

to arm the blacks, it may be seen that the Union — especially after the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued — had entered upon the definite and acknowledged policy of making soldiers of the ex-slaves; but the undertaking was everywhere considered experimental, and was most unpopular in many quarters, especially in the army. In fulfilment of the new policy, the War Department, on the 25th of March, 1863, issued an order to Brigadier-General Lorenzo Thomas, Adjutant-General United States Army, directing him to make an inspection of the military situation in the West, with special reference to the condition of the freedmen and the enlistment of Negro troops. I quote from the order as follows:

“Third. The President desires that you should confer frèely with Major-General Grant and the officers with whom you may have communication and explain to them the importance attached by the Government to the use of the colored population emancipated by the President’s proclamation, and particularly for the organization of their labor and military strength. You will cause it to be understood that no officer in the United States service is regarded as in the discharge of his duties under the acts of Congress, the President’s proclamation, and the orders of this Department, who fails to employ to the utmost extent the aid and co-operation of the loyal colored population in performing the labors incident to military operations, and also in performing the duties of soldiers under proper organization, and that any obstacle thrown in the way of these ends is regarded by the President as a violation of the acts of Congress and the declared purposes of the Government in using every means to bring the war to an end.

“Fourth. You will ascertain what military officers are willing to take command of colored troops; ascertain their qualifications for that purpose, and if troops can be raised and organized you will, so far as can be done without prejudice to the service, relieve officers and privates from the service in which they are engaged, to

receive commissions such as they may be qualified to exercise in the organization of brigades, regiments, and companies of colored troops. You are authorized in this connection to issue in the name of this Department letters of appointment for field and company officers, and to organize such troops for military service to the utmost extent to which they can be obtained in accordance to the rules and regulations of the service. You will see, moreover, and expressly enjoin upon the various staff departments of the service, that such troops are to be provided with supplies upon the requisition of the proper officers, and in the same manner as other troops in the service."

The attitude of the army toward the Negro as a soldier was gradually undergoing a change, although intense prejudice still existed against him. Not a few of the subordinate officers confessed no sympathy with the freedom assured the Negro by the President's proclamation, but even they, for the most part, were attentive that no unnecessary suffering should exist. The commanding officers, with few exceptions, did what they could to insure the working out of the Government's policy, even though they may personally have been opposed to it. The Emancipation Proclamation had become more popular, however, with all classes and among all ranks of soldiers, so that the situation was more or less favorable to General Thomas's mission in the Valley.

In my capacity of Superintendent of Freedmen, it devolved upon me to see that General Thomas was given every facility for the pursuit of his task. I therefore went with him in person to the principal camps within my jurisdiction, following the route of the Memphis and Charleston railroad as far as Corinth and returning to Memphis by way of Jackson (Tennessee), Grand Junction, and Colliersville. On May 18, after the completion of this

tour, General Thomas reported to the War Department his return from Corinth to Memphis, having addressed the troops at twelve different points. About a month before this date he had addressed the troops immediately under General Grant at Grant's headquarters before Vicksburg, at Milliken's Bend. The Adjutant-General of the army manifestly felt the importance of the change in policy which he was announcing, and his mission was fulfilled with no little ceremony. The command to which he was to address himself would be drawn up before him in single rank or in a hollow square, according to its size, and the order of the War Department would be read to officers and men. Sometimes the General would make a speech. When he had finished, he would ask those who were opposed to the order to move out one step from the ranks. A few would do so, impelled by the strength of their prejudice, and these General Thomas would promptly order to the guardhouse, there to revise the opinion he had invited them to express. The General's order, as we have seen, made it the urgent duty of every one to further the plans of the Government in arming the Negro; he was further empowered "to dismiss and to commission officers according as they were for or against the new policy without referring their cases to Washington,"¹ so that his action in thus taking means to assure himself of the sentiment of the army was sufficiently justified; but the spectacle of a soldier invited to express his opinion, and forthwith disciplined for having an opinion to express, was not without a certain grim humor.

¹ G. W. Williams, *A History of Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion*, p. 109.

So great a change in policy had not been effected without much agitation and effort on the part of those convinced of the advisability of arming the blacks. All who had been termed "abolitionists" were by no means agreed upon how much the Negro might be able to accomplish as a soldier; but there was a distinct element, led among others by Governor Andrews of Massachusetts, Wendell Phillips, Major Stearns, and the Shaws, father and son, that staunchly advocated the policy of arming him. That Mr. Lincoln withheld his consent in the face of the powerful advocacy of good men such as these, until he felt assured that the measure would prove a benefit and not a menace to the Union cause, and would not subject the people of the South to the horrors of an insurrection, is a manifestation of his poise and wisdom which is sometimes overlooked. With the announcement of the change of policy, efforts to create a sentiment on behalf of the Negro were not remitted.

In spite of the widespread distrust as to how the Negro would conduct himself in the field much evidence was circulated in his favor; his record in the Revolution was sent broadcast, and gradually the number of those in favor of arming him greatly increased. In this work of creating sentiment in the Negro's favor the Union League Club bore, of course, an active part, publishing pamphlets in connection with its efforts to raise Negro regiments, under National authority, in the State of New York. With some exceptions it was curious to see how the feeling against the Negro subsided when it became clear that he might figure as a useful factor in saving the Union. Our soldiers soon ceased to offer any objection to his replacing the

white man on the firing line and receiving rebel bullets. Moreover, an officer of a colored regiment risen from the ranks had small cause to find fault with the policy which was responsible for his opportunity for such advancement. As for the Negro himself, he very soon vindicated the action of the Government and won for himself the commendation of his officers and the respect of his companions in the service.¹ In connection with the willingness of the Negro to serve the Union cause Chaplain Fiske tells the following story:

Some months before the order was issued providing for the organization of colored troops, arms had been given to a few Negroes at Camp Fiske, near Memphis, and at some of the other camps, where the system of protecting the settlements by colored guards was thus initiated. This practice called upon the men to protect their own wives and children, and no duty was ever more eagerly or faithfully fulfilled. The family instinct of the Negro, which Mr. Lincoln relied upon so much and hoped to develop, was thus brought into activity at once, and proved a tremendous power in maintaining order and regularity in the camps.

On the occasion of detailing the men to this service, Chaplain Fiske, at that time Superintendent of Freedmen for Memphis, spoke to them seriously of the responsibility intrusted to them, and of the future possibility of their being

¹ For accounts of the bravery and efficiency of the Negro troops see A History of Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, G. W. Williams; Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, p. 545; Samuel Chapman Armstrong: A Biographical Study, Edith Armstrong Talbot; Army life in a Black Regiment, T. W. Higginson; The Negro in the Regular Army, Oswald Villard, in *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1903.

received into the regular service of the United States army. He painted the terrors and duties of war as black and as stern as his imagination could conjure them, and finished by asking those who were ready to face these dangers to move out one step from the line. The order was no sooner spoken than the whole line swept towards him as one man.

Probably some seventy thousand colored troops were raised in the Mississippi Valley.

When the first regiments were organized in the territory under my jurisdiction, a good deal of pressure was brought to bear upon me to induce me to take command of one of the regiments; but I was devoted to my profession, and although General Grant's orders had detached me from my duties as chaplain, I was able still to devote myself to the alleviation of suffering.

With the coming of General Thomas into our midst another line of policy was inaugurated in addition to the enlistment of the Negroes. I refer to the various systems of leasing abandoned plantations. The question was taken up somewhat tentatively at first, but later, after experiment and further elaboration, these operations were carried on with great vigor and with at least partial success. Mention has already been made of the special effort of the Freedmen's Department to supply the Negro with work, and the terms of Grant's orders sufficiently indicate that agriculture formed one important element in our plans for the colored population for which we were caring. During the winter the chief enterprise in which the Negroes engaged was that of supplying the wood necessary for our military operations, — especially along the Mississippi. With the ap-

proach of spring, however, every effort was made to resume work on the abandoned lands adjacent to the camps and reasonably secure from the attacks of guerillas. In spite of delays and difficulties due to the fact that I was obliged to rely for assistance almost wholly upon the benevolence of the public, the work was begun about the middle of March, and a month later one hundred ploughs arrived, together with other farming implements and seeds, and the agricultural enterprises for the season were well under way.

General Thomas proposed to extend these operations by leasing the abandoned lands "to persons of proper character and qualifications," and appointed a commission, consisting of George B. Field, Captain A. E. Shickle, and the Rev. D. S. Livermore, whose duty it should be to superintend the leasing of plantations and deal justly with the interests of employer and employed. His plan¹ provided for the collection of a tax — at the rate of two dollars per bale of four hundred pounds of cotton, and five cents per bushel on corn and potatoes — on the product of the plantation, and payable to the Government in lieu of rent. The tax was, of course, to be collected by the agents of the Treasury Department. Military protection was not guaranteed the lessees, though every possible effort was to be made to insure the safety of those leasing or working on plantations. The lessee pledged himself to employ all Negroes hired by him and turned over to him by the commission, until February 1, 1864, and to feed, clothe, and treat them humanely, the clothing to be deducted from

¹ For full text of order (issued April 5, 1863) see *Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1863, pp. 428-429.

the wages, furnished at cost, and — whenever the destitution of the Negro demanded it — in advance of his earnings. The schedule of wages was very low, — without doubt unnecessarily so: for able-bodied men over fifteen years of age, seven dollars per month; for women of the same class, five dollars per month; for children between the ages of twelve and fifteen, half rates, no child under twelve to be employed as a field hand. In explanation of this low rate it should be said at once that free Negro labor in the Valley was as yet an unknown quantity; it was still somewhat problematical how much the free Negro could earn, and wholly problematical how much the ex-slaveholder and the Northern speculator could be made to pay him. Indeed, the character of the whole scheme was experimental, so much so that General Thomas — owing largely to the lateness of the season — provided in the fifth paragraph of his order that should it be found impracticable to hire all the Negroes needing employment to responsible lessees, superintendents were to be appointed who should manage the lands for the exclusive benefit of the Government and the freedmen so employed. This provision practically insured the continuance of the independent efforts inaugurated by the officers of the Freedmen's Department, and was designed to prevent unnecessary destitution among the Negroes. General Thomas's plan was afterwards subjected to the severest criticism; but while it was, as I have said, tentative and without doubt faulty in many particulars, its aim was certainly to benefit the Negroes, and in cases where the lessees proved wise, humane, or even manageable, it fulfilled in practice the hopes of its originators. The main object of

the Government in fostering it was to fill the country lately won from the rebels with a loyal population. The policy promised well, and in many ways was justified by the results. We shall see, however, in later chapters with what complications and difficulties it was involved.

CHAPTER VI

I report to Grant at Vicksburg before the surrender. An unpublished letter from Grant to Lincoln. The Shirley family and Grant's kindness to them. On the way to Washington. Stirring news.

THE difficult winter of 1862 to 1863 had passed, — a winter of great trials for the army and of hardly less strain upon the depressed feelings of the country. Our friends had been pleading for stirring news of victories won, and had received only accounts of sickness in marshes and swamps, — the inactive life of the camp enlivened by little better than fruitless expeditions to make or find river channels by which to evade the Vicksburg batteries or penetrate the country north of the city. Nature herself seemed to be opposing the Union cause: there was neither dry land available on which to gather the troops destined for the attack on Vicksburg, nor navigable channels in the bayous through which to float them into the enemy's country. But spring had come, and with it the marvellous and unparalleled campaign during which Grant, having moved his troops southward through Louisiana, had crossed the Mississippi, cut loose from his base of supplies, and bewildering the enemy by the sheer hardihood of his operations, had marched to the rear of Vicksburg, having fought his five battles and won as many victories, and now, in the days of which I write, was hemming in the beleaguered town.

It had again become necessary for me to see our Commanding General. The complications connected with the leasing of lands to which I referred in the preceding chapter had by no means resolved themselves into orderliness. It seemed advisable, therefore, to render a report of what had been accomplished by my assistants and submit it through Adjutant-General Rawlins to Grant himself. My own desire was to tender my resignation and return to my interrupted duties as chaplain of my regiment. Accordingly I started for Vicksburg early in June. My old friend, Colonel Vogleson, formerly the quartermaster of my own regiment, had general charge of the commissary stores on vessels anchored in the mouth of the Yazoo, and to him I went for guidance to Grant's headquarters. Anchored close at hand were other vessels bearing the stores of the Sanitary Commission, with Dr. Warriner in charge. The Doctor told me that I should find General Grant with new wrinkles in his forehead, like crows' feet, and looking like half a dozen men condensed into one. I reached Grant's quarters in the primeval forest in the rear of Vicksburg. The heat of summer was on, and the air was filled with the sputter and rattle of musketry and the roar and thunder of artillery and bursting shells. A few tents were in sight, — but not many, — well disposed for the convenience of the staff. The open spaces had been trodden down into rough roads and bypaths by the feet of horses and men. Here and there seats of rough boards had been attached to the trunks of the huge trees. As I passed on the roadway near Grant's tent, which stood a little apart from the others, the General, who was seated just outside, hailed me and asked what I would have. I

explained that I had prepared a report of the work done under his orders and was just about to leave it with General Rawlins. As I spoke, my eye noted the peculiarly unassuming appearance of the General. Unassuming indeed he always was, and now his very clothes, as well as the crows' feet on his brow, bore testimony to the strenuousness of the life he was leading. Later on he told me jocosely that a toothbrush and a comb had been his outfit in the campaign just closing. He was dressed when I first saw him in an old brown linen duster surmounted by an old slouch hat; his trousers showed holes worn by the boot-straps, where they had rubbed against the saddle.

"Ah," he said, as I mentioned the report, "come into the tent and read it to me."

He entered the tent as he spoke, — I following, — and threw down the lapel behind us. But I demurred.

"General Grant," I said, "it's too long, you can't afford the time."

"Well," he replied, "sit down and read, and I will tell you to stop if necessary."

Thereupon we sat down to the report, dated April 29, 1863. It comprised some thirty-four pages of foolscap, covered on both sides of the sheet with the careful old-fashioned writing of my clerk, Major W. D. Sargent, — matter tedious enough, it seemed to me, to put before this leader of armies. But he showed not a sign of weariness to the end, and when I had finished he remarked: "That is a very important report. I must send you with it to the President, with a personal letter."

He then wrote with his usual promptitude the following letter:

NEAR VICKSBURG, MISS.,

HON. A. LINCOLN,

June 11, 1863.

President of the United States,

SIR, — Enclosed herewith I send report of Chaplain J. Eaton, General Superintendent of Contrabands for this Department, embracing a very complete history of what has been done for and with the class of people within my command to the present time.

Finding that negroes were coming into our lines in great numbers and receiving kind or abusive treatment according to the peculiar views of the troops they first came in contact with, and not being able to give that personal attention to their care and use the matter demanded, I determined to appoint a General Superintendent over the whole subject and give him such Assistants as the duties assigned him might require. Mr. Eaton was selected for this position. I have given him such aid as was in my power, by the publication from time to time of such orders as seemed to be required, and generally at the suggestion of the Superintendent.

Mr. Eaton's labors in his undertaking have been unremitting and skilful, and I fear in many instances very trying. That he has been of very great service to the blacks in having them provided for when otherwise they would have been neglected, and to the Government in finding employment for the negro, whereby he might earn what he was receiving, the accompanying report will show, and many hundreds of visitors and officers and soldiers near the different corps can bear witness to.

I commend the report to your favorable notice, and especially that portion of it which would suggest orders regulating the subject of providing for the government of the contraband subject, which a Department Commander is not competent to issue.

I have the honor to be

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) U. S. GRANT,

Maj.-Gen. Vols.

In order to characterize for the reader the report to which the General had just listened, I reproduce a few

passages. From an elaborate series of classified questions to which answers were made by my assistants, I quote the following statements with reference to the intelligence of the Negro. These comments appear in my report in the order quoted, and were made respectively by my representatives at Corinth, Cairo, Grand Junction, Holly Springs, Memphis, Bolivar, and La Grange:

“(1) Far more intelligent than I supposed. Some are men of fine intelligence and correct views.

“(2) Their common intelligence is good, much better than we had supposed.

“(3) Exhibit intelligence greater than has been attributed to their race, — very shrewd in escaping from their masters and in shirking work, if so disposed.

“(4) House servants much more intelligent than field hands. All learn rapidly, are intuitive, not reflective, — need line upon line.

“(5) Higher than I had expected — keen and bright when they wish to understand; — stupid and idiotic when they do not.

“(6) Better than many suppose. Good as any could expect under the circumstances.

“(7) As good as that of men, women, and children anywhere or of any color who cannot read.”

With reference to the Negro's attitude toward religion I quote the following testimony from the Superintendent at Memphis: “Notions of doctrine better than to be expected — practices not always in accordance with their notions, — as is also true of other races. . . . Their religion one of feeling, not necessarily affecting their living. If one finds himself susceptible to religious excitement or sentiment, he is a religious man, though at the same time he may lie, steal, drink, and commit adultery.”

In view of the fact that the Negro was an unknown

quantity in those early days, my officers would seem to have achieved a fairly distinct notion of his type and acquirements.

Of the policy then recently inaugurated of arming the blacks I spoke at some length, urging the importance of drafting the Negro into regiments composed of his own race. Many who failed to trust the Negroes *en masse* counselled that the ranks of the white regiments and companies be replenished by Negro recruits. The very vivid example before me of the friction and disturbance which were engendered at the time by any enforced relationship between the Negro and the Union soldier convinced me of the unwisdom of such a course. My comments, however, with reference to the need of white officers for the Negro regiments were equally positive in tone :

“ All of the weaker qualities of the blacks should be counterbalanced by the excellencies of the officers. It is not enough that the men to command them merely have sufficient intelligence to do all business, or sufficient military experience or skill, or adequate knowledge of sanitary conditions ; they should be solid men, of large and available resources, skilled in the management of human nature, self-poised, patient, yet quick to act, — kindly disposed towards the blacks, and specially fitted to manage persons so ignorant, so long slaves. They should be guarded by principles of right so thoroughly wrought into themselves that no temptations could induce them to abuse their power. With the right men as commanders, I am convinced of the success of arming the Negroes, — of their intense loyalty as troops, of their terror to the enemy, of their superior advantages for certain classes of service — particularly for cavalry duty. Try the Negro as a soldier, let his conduct and events give him his commission as they have his place in the ranks.

“ The Negro’s tribal origin has much to do with his capacity.

The service would undoubtedly be rendered more efficient by rejecting the lowest types of the more inferior tribes. . . . Any one looking at the proportion of mixed blood indicated in the above imperfect tables [submitted with the report] will see at once that we are not dealing solely with the question of arming those altogether excluded from European blood. Already some regiments of white soldiers have recruited members all their lives slaves, and not to be distinguished by any African characteristic. Van Dorn paroled a servant at Holly Springs, not suspecting his African descent."

In connection with the expenses of the supervisory work for the Negroes, the report gives some interesting figures: Of the twenty-two thousand contrabands already reported and estimated as having come within the lines of the Department, the number rationed in all the camps collectively did not exceed sixty-six hundred. Of these about one-third received half rations. On a rigid calculation based on the cost of rationing the contrabands as against the wages paid by Government for labor such as the Negroes performed, I was able to make the following statement: "If the contrabands could be and were excluded from this Department and white laborers employed, the Government would pay out \$42,661 per month more than it now pays for the same work and for the support of all idle and feeble contrabands." As a matter of fact, the saving to Government was in excess of this figure. The number receiving full rations was greatly diminished by those who made a whole or partial return in labor or in crops. This factor was discounted in the above statement. In many instances the corn issued to the contrabands was gathered from abandoned Confederate plantations and was ground by the contrabands them-

selves. The earnings of the women and children in picking cotton were also omitted from the estimate here quoted. At Grand Junction alone this item amounted to some twenty thousand dollars in cotton turned over to Government.

I took occasion in the course of this report to outline what seemed to me the essentials of any organized attempt to superintend Negro labor and the industrial conditions amid which the Negroes worked. The following extracts are from the summary with which the report closed :

“I would urge, First : special military provision as necessary alike to the full military effect of the Proclamation upon the armed rebellion ; to the interests of the people declared free, — equally with respect to their safe, comfortable, and useful conduct through the transition from slavery to freedom, and their fit preparation for their new privileges ; also to the security against servile insurrection, and the speediest restoration of Government authority over rebellious States. . . . The exercise of military authority being entirely under control of the Executive could not only adjust itself to all grades of intelligence and enterprise among these people, and to current changes, but be withdrawn in part or altogether at any moment desirable.

“Second : A distinct corps of officers especially fit in ability and character, with a chief at Washington, subordinates in the field, — co-operating with the Commanders of Departments, — and in each district an appropriate corps of assistants chosen so far as practicable from among worthy soldiers incapacitated for active field service.”

The report then provides for industrial operations to be carried on under the supervision of freedmen officers working in co-operation with the officers of the Treasury Department, whose function it should be to regulate the possession and use of lands, collect taxes, and disburse

funds. Officers of freedmen, however, themselves a military body, were to control the individual, industrial, social, and educational interests of the Negro, subject to the President and the Secretary of War. A number of the features suggested in this outline reappeared in the legislative plans for the organization of the Freedmen's Bureau.

Nothing is more strongly emphasized in this personal and contemporary record of my early work than the havoc wrought by the base and excessive passions of mankind which war inculcates and fosters. The prejudices and vices of our officers and soldiers, together with the passions of the South, lay heavy on mind and heart, and I could not forbear to comment on conditions which had created such unnecessary suffering and had so aggravated the difficulties of my task. The indignities to which my officers were subjected were particularly hard to endure. The following comments indicate in a measure, at least, the causes of my distress:

"Strange to say and sad to confess, the persons loudest in their charges of worthlessness, and their cry that the whole object of the Government is 'nigger equality,' are not always the freest from illicit intercourse with the colored women."

And again

"Let every soldier and officer, every lover of liberty, divest himself of all passion and prejudice, submit himself to the dictates of common sense and to Divine guidance, and I cannot doubt the way will open plainly before us. I am satisfied the difficulties in here less in the questions of management than in ourselves."

It should be remembered that Grant at this time was not only commanding his forces immediately engaged in the siege of Vicksburg,—enough in itself to absorb the

energies of one man, — but was holding himself in readiness for an attack which might be made by Johnson at any moment upon the forces under Sherman who was guarding Grant's rear along the Big Black. His willingness to lend himself and his energies to a work in one sense far removed from the great issues he was facing was nothing short of marvellous. A man of less concentration and devotion would not have dared thus to expend himself.

Presently, as we talked, the General bade his orderly bring supper, which was soon placed on a small table before us. It was the simplest kind of a meal, attended with the least possible ceremony. As to my resignation, General Grant had told me that it would not be accepted, and that I must continue in my present duties. Our conversation turned upon many themes. As we talked, I asked the General if in his intercourse with the persons in the neighboring country he had chanced to hear of a man named Shirley. It then transpired that Mr. Shirley had but just left headquarters a few moments before my arrival. "I have become well acquainted with him," pursued General Grant, "and he is often here. He is very intelligent, knows all about the country, and as I am well assured of his devotion to the Union, he gives me much needed information."

I told the General that I had letters for Mr. Shirley from his brother, intrusted to me by my own brother, — who had in fact married a niece of the gentleman in question. General Grant thereupon told me the story of the Shirleys, — a story of so much interest that I reproduce it here.

Mr. and Mrs. Shirley had lived, the General told me, in a house known to the soldiers during the siege as the

"White House," which stood directly between the defences of the Confederate and Union forces. Upon visiting it I found it to be a typical Southern homestead, a story and a half high, a wide hall in the centre, with large, high-ceiled rooms on each side and spacious verandas back and front. It stood about three hundred yards in front of the Confederate defences. The bullets of the enemy had perforated the house here and there, and the outbuildings and fences were all destroyed. The Engineer Corps under General Hickenlooper had carried on with great activity the construction of a sap intended to undermine the Confederate defences, and here preparations were making for the explosion which Grant describes in his "Memoirs." As I rode up and down the sap, which had been made deep enough for the use of horses, bullets flew around my head. The passage began outside of the "White House" grounds and passed in front of the house. On one side of it a brave man from the neighborhood of Louisville—Foster by name—had erected a defence which served him as a point of vantage into which he could climb and be protected at the same time from the bullets of the enemy. This man had taken possession of a coon-skin cap belonging to Mr. Shirley's young son. In spite of the heat he wore that cap with the tails hanging down his back all through the siege, and was known to his comrades as "Coon-skin Foster." On account of the location of the "White House" it was constantly used by the Union officers—Grant among others—as a point from which to make observations, and it served at one time as General Logan's headquarters. Standing as it did midway between the two armies, very near the spot where Pemberton and Grant met in confer-



THE SHIRLEY HOMESTEAD, OR "WHITE HOUSE,"
DURING THE VICKSBURG SIEGE.

(Now a part of the Vicksburg National Park.)

ence, it assumed so much historic interest that, in 1902, the Secretary of War, carrying out the provisions of Congress, restored the house to its original condition. It is now one of the most interesting features in the National Park maintained by the Government on the site of the Vicksburg campaign,—interesting alike to ex-Confederates and Unionists. Many years after the events of which General Grant told me, Mr. Shirley's daughter wrote the following vivid description of the peaceful homestead and its inmates before the breaking out of the war: ¹

“The house stood on an elevation somewhat back from the road. A driveway describing a semi-circle passed the door, and a walk led from the front porch to the road, which was reached from that point by a flight of steps. This walk was bordered with red flowering quince, fragrant white syringas and roses, while close to the edge bloomed violets, jonquils, and hyacinths. On one side of the porch was a beautiful pink crape myrtle, and on the other grew an althea tree. There was a large garden in the rear which was my father's special pride. To old Uncle Will, the oldest slave on the place, tall, bent, black, and wrinkled, was given the care of this garden. When another servant was sent to do the heavier work of it, the old man was greatly pleased to superintend and assume a little authority. We all liked to talk to him and listen to his tales of other days, when he was young. Of these stories he had an unfailing supply. I can see him now stop and rest his chin on his hoe as he talked, then hoe a few rows, then talk again; when there was no one by to

¹ The Shirley narrative is reprinted from the *Fredonia Censor* of May 30, 1900, by the courtesy of the editor.

listen, he held conversations with himself. Father always enjoyed his little talks with Uncle Will as he passed through the garden, and they often had discussions on various subjects — crops, slaves, etc., etc., — and once Uncle Will said, ‘What right, Massa, has you to own me?’ My father could only answer laughingly, ‘Because I bought you.’

“As children, of course, we had no thought of slavery as wrong; we saw only the bright side of the system. The Negroes seemed a part of the family, and I remember that I was as polite to Aunt Sarah, the cook, and to Aunt Cynthia, the housemaid, Uncle Will’s wife, as I was to my mother, and they reprimanded me about as often as she did.

“My father was an old-time Whig, and when secession was broached he was firm in his allegiance to the Union. He had the courage to be true to his convictions, — no easy matter when neighbors and friends all flocked to secession and were loud in their denunciation of Union men, calling them traitors. But the little band of Union men, Judge Houghton of Vicksburg among them, had their secret meetings where they talked in low voices and with bated breath exchanging Northern news and encouraging each other with hopes that the Federal army must win in spite of all said to the contrary by the South. We still sang our patriotic airs out at the country home, although it was not altogether prudent. While there were mutterings of war, my brother Frederick, then a member of a Vicksburg military company, was unwise enough to say that he would rather serve Lincoln twenty years than Jeff Davis two hours. This inflamed the hot-headed

young Southerners, and there was loud talk of hanging. It came to the ears of one of our servants, and he hurried out that evening to tell us, and to urge that Master Frederick be sent away, as he feared they might do him harm. After a short family conference, we packed his trunk, and in the early morning he left for Indiana, and only once did we hear from him until he returned after the surrender of Vicksburg and after our father's death."

With the threatened approach of active hostilities around Vicksburg, Mr. Shirley left his wife and youngest son in the "White House" and went to fetch his daughter, in order that the family might at least be together in the coming experiences, — whatever these might prove to be. Miss Shirley was at that time in Clinton — a distance of about forty miles — attending one of the few schools which the struggle had left in operation in the South. This institution, curiously enough, although conducted by a Northerner, Dr. Hillman, a graduate of Brown University, had been protected by special orders issued by Jefferson Davis.

During Mr. Shirley's absence the situation at the "White House" became most precarious. According to the daughter's narrative, "The Confederates, knowing that they must soon retreat behind their fortifications at Vicksburg, began their preparations by destroying what they could outside. They burned all the houses in front of their works, but my mother's persistent refusal to go out of hers, and her determination to prevent its destruction, delayed its being set on fire until the first company of Federals under Captain McKee — following the Jackson road which led by our house — appeared on the hills to the

east of us. As the last of the rear guard of the Confederates came up in full retreat toward the defences of Vicksburg, torches were applied to the barns and outhouses, and these were soon burned to the ground. But the poor fellow who was appointed to fire the house while approaching it with his ball of blazing cotton, was struck by a bullet of the pursuing vanguard, and crept away under the shelter of some planks, where he died alone, his body being found next day and buried under the corner of the house.

"My mother and the old home were greeted by a shower of bullets and shell from the advancing Union army. One shot passed her as she stood in an open doorway. A piece of shell struck the top of a chimney and tore it away, and passing into an upper room shattered a bedstead. My mother thought rapidly; the thing to be done was to hang out a flag of truce, and quickly she secured a sheet to a broom handle, and sending it by our carriage driver to the upper front porch, where it might be seen from a distance, it was soon waving a truce to the bullets.

"The first officers rushed into the house half expecting to find Confederates hidden away ready to betray them, and were not easily persuaded that we were Union people. My mother had some talking to do. Now all was confusion and excitement. The great host advanced rapidly, and the house, the grounds, and the road, the woods behind, were soon alive with Union soldiers, and that same afternoon the fighting began. Bullets came thick and fast, shells hissed and screamed through the air, cannon roared, the dead and the dying were brought into the old home. War, terrible war, had come to our very hearthstone, and here in the midst of it my mother and brother remained

for three days. The two house servants stayed by them. Household treasures were soon destroyed under the ruthless hand of the soldier, but through the kindness of some officers our trunks and the best of the furniture were saved.

"My brother was delighted to be permitted to go into the trenches and do a little fighting for his country, but those three days must have been a time of great distress for my mother, and I think she never entirely recovered from the severe strain caused by the war. She has told me that she and the two house servants sat most of the time in the chimney-corner, where the bullets might not strike them. Meanwhile our carriage driver and others of our colored men were digging a cave in the side of a hill in the valley some distance back of the house, for her to move into, as General McPherson had said she must not stay at the house, as it was no place for a woman. At daylight on the fourth day she left, the soldiers making a narrow opening through their ranks for her to pass.

"Here in this miserable cave, a blanket strung across the opening, with her trunk and her rocking-chair, all her possessions available then, and half sick, she was found by my father a few days later.

"Meanwhile, before the appearance of the Union forces, my father had arrived at Clinton. It was Monday, and he planned to return with me next day. The war was drawing closer and closer around us, and foreseeing that our home might become a fighting centre, he was anxious that we should be together, come what would. I packed my trunk and sent it with my books on the train leaving Tuesday, in charge of the servant who came with father.

Wednesday morning all was excitement. 'The Yankees are coming, the Yankees are coming!' The news spread terror to all but a few hearts, who secretly rejoiced; two of the few were father and myself. He was so happy that he forgot to think of ourselves or how we were to get home. The people of the village were hurrying hither and yon, the women hysterical, many hiding their jewels and their money. Father and I sat quietly on the long piazza of my sister's house, where I had been staying while attending school, and awaited the coming of the strangers. Along in the afternoon the first of the bluecoats appeared, and, oddly enough, came straight to our house, and alighting, walked in. Of course they were given a warm welcome by my father. They asked for water and for milk, which we gave them, and then they sat for a long time talking and laughing, and after a while father spoke of music and invited them into the parlor, where there was a piano, and I played Northern and Southern patriotic airs, much to their delight. It had been a long time since they had enjoyed a quiet social time in a home, and evidently it was a pleasurable afternoon for them. Some of them said it had been months since they had spoken to a white woman.

"I must not forget to mention the other occupants of the parlor, — two sacks of live chickens and two turkeys tied behind the sofa. Knowing the fondness of soldiers for poultry and for horses, and desirous of saving some for themselves, the people of the village had hidden away what they could, putting them in all sorts of hiding-places. In our garret there were chickens; one mule I knew of was in hiding in our Institute gymnasium, a wall of cotton bales being built around, so his voice might not be heard.

My sister-in-law, as I have said, had a number of her chickens in the parlor. The sound of the piano roused the fowls from their dreams; the chickens squirmed and peeped, the turkeys flapped their wings and gobbled. The officers smiled and looked at each other, and then we all laughed.

“During the afternoon the depot was burned, and the railroad tracks torn up, cutting off our chance of returning home by rail. Soldiers began pouring in, regiment after regiment passing through on their way to Vicksburg, which so soon was to be the seat of war. For three days there was a steady tramp, tramp; brass bands played the stirring national airs; ‘Dixie’ was heard no more, the dear old flag floated to the breeze, and the great procession moved on. Far away over the winding hills we saw the blue-coats, their bayonets glittering in the sunshine, their flags floating to the breeze,—marching to long days of suffering, to death, and to victory. As my father looked at them I saw the light of a great joy in his eyes; they had come at last, the soldiers of the Union, who carried the old flag so dear to him. He knew their coming meant destruction to his home, to all he owned—for the rear of Vicksburg was their destination—but that was so little compared to the great end. He was willing to lose all, even though he was old,—sixty-nine years of age, when it is not so easy to rebuild one’s fortunes. He thought only that the Union must and shall be preserved.

“The usually quiet little village of Clinton was now all confusion. The soldiers were bent on destruction; stables were torn down, smoke-houses invaded and emptied of all their bacon and hams; chicken-houses were depopulated,

vehicles of all kinds were taken or destroyed, barrels of sugar or molasses were emptied, — the sugar carried off, while the molasses ran in streams in the yard. The bees, not liking to be disturbed, and attracted also by the flowing molasses, hovered around in large numbers, and directed much of their attention to the soldiers, thus adding still more to the confusion. Then, too, the soldiers were chasing the hens around the yard trying to catch them, and the frightened fowls squawked and lent their voices to the uproar. The dry-goods stores were broken into; the beautiful goods given to Negroes or destroyed, crockery broken, — making sad havoc with the merchants' stock, General Sherman's protection papers proving of very little value. As my wardrobe was now so reduced, I bought a calico, for which I paid forty dollars, a handkerchief for seven dollars, and some lace for my neck for twenty-five dollars. The price of the whole would now be perhaps two dollars and fifty cents. Of course I had only Confederate money then.

"At last the soldiers were all gone and Clinton was left to take a long breath, pick up the remains of everything, and go on with life again. They patched up harnesses as best they could, mended old broken wagons, set the few surviving hens on what eggs could be found, and secured the few stray horses and cows. The mule came out from his cotton-bale prison, the chickens came down from the garrets, and life went on somewhat as usual.

"Now father's thoughts turned to what we ought to do. How to get home was the question, and he was very anxious to get there. My mother and brother Quincy were alone in the old house, and he wanted to be with them.

There was no way but to walk. We were to start the day after the army had left Clinton, but my sister-in-law could not agree to my going. She said it would be very foolish for me, a young girl, to take such a tramp with only my father at his age as protector against stragglers from the army, and she persuaded him to let me remain with her. So we saw him start out on that long, hot, dusty walk of forty miles, — not a young man, or accustomed to much walking. It was a sad parting, for we thought it might be a last good-bye. My sister, indeed, never did see him again.

“The Institute took up its work and I went on with my studies, — borrowing books, as mine had all gone to Vicksburg. Among those books, by the way, was a diary that I had kept for several years, and this, I suppose, was read by many a soldier, — much to my mortification at the time; but it removed all doubts of our unionism, for I had given there the truth about our sentiments. The book was returned to my mother later by General Smith, who said he had seen it around camp and it was time the owner had it.¹

“At Clinton we heard nothing from home except once from some Confederate soldiers, a rumor that the house had been burned, and we knew the siege had begun. At night I heard the faint boom of the far-away cannon, which

¹ This diary proved to be a prize to the soldiers, and taken in connection with the activity of Mr. Shirley's son, greatly impressed them. They made Grant acquainted with its contents, and soldiers and General alike were united in their judgment that the unsophisticated journal was unmistakable evidence of the loyalty of the family. The writer described the daily events of their lives, telling how they suffered when news came of the defeat of the Union army, and how they rejoiced when they learned of its victories. It left no possible doubt of their attitude and sentiments.

gave a slight jar to my bed. We now had Confederate officers for visitors instead of the bluecoats.

"Some days after the school term had closed and just as I was planning to visit a schoolmate in her country home, something happened which changed all my plans. One night about midnight we heard distant rumblings — ominous sounds they were at that hour. Louder and louder they grew, nearer and nearer they came, and we began to realize that they were the roar of artillery wagons, and soon came the rumor that Vicksburg had fallen. The excitement and the sorrow were great. Again all was confusion. The Confederates rushed on, and after them came the Union soldiers. One night the gray coats, the next the blue. The same scenes as before were enacted, only there was not much left to be taken or destroyed.

"Still no news of my home or family, except vague stories on which I could not rely. About a week later, as the family were sitting on the piazza, two men came up the walk and asked to see Miss Shirley. They were telegraph operators, and had received word that morning from General Grant to the effect that my father wished me to come into Vicksburg with General McArthur's division, which would move in a few days. The officers were very kind to me; one colonel asked me to ride at the head of his regiment and brought a horse and side saddle. I was, however, not so foolish as to travel in that unsuitable manner, and instead accepted a seat in an ambulance in charge of a Dr. Beach of Ohio. My family parted with me regretfully. Dressed in my forty-dollar calico, and wearing a huge Shaker sunbonnet, I bade them all a sad good-bye, and took my seat in the ambulance. Two soldiers, too

sick to march, lay on the floor; the Scotch driver and a captain occupied the seat in front, while a lieutenant and I sat on the other. The driver had his little jokes and stories of life in Scotland to enliven the ride, the officers were entertaining, the surgeon riding beside us would occasionally look in to ask if he could do anything for my comfort,—all were trying to make my journey as pleasant as possible. It was an odd situation for me, a young girl, travelling alone with an army, and I enjoyed amazingly all its novelty. There were many queer sights by the way. I recall particularly the Negro women following the army, carrying all their possessions on their heads, great feather beds tied up in sheets and holding their few belongings. At night, when a halt was called, I was escorted by the Captain to the nearest house, where he requested that I be given a night's lodging, saying that he would pay for it. The inmates generally gave their consent grudgingly, knowing, however, that it was a case of must,—but we always parted friends. . . . Two days I travelled in this way, and then I heard that a Mrs. Baum of Vicksburg—an old acquaintance—and her two children were along somewhere, and I very gladly had her hunted up and put myself in her ambulance, where she was pleased to give me a seat. The last day was an eventful one. In the afternoon there came up a terrific thunder-shower, and while the rain was coming down in torrents, the lightning nearly blinding us, the thunder terrifying, we had to cross the Big Black River on a pontoon bridge, and then ascend one of the steepest hills I ever saw. Such swearing! Such cries to the poor dumb beasts to urge them upwards and onwards! Such slipping in the Mississippi mud! I

thought some one of those fifty or seventy-five wagons would certainly go to pieces. I shut my eyes. Rain dripped down from the top of the ambulance, and fell on my 'Shaker,' wilting it most decidedly; my face was dirty from the never-failing dust, and the water running down my cheeks on the dust gave it a mottled and streaked appearance. I did not look like a reigning belle just then. After much tribulation we managed to reach the top of the hill without accident, and proceeded to General McArthur's tent, where we were invited to dinner. I remember feeling just a little uncomfortable as I took my seat at the table surrounded by those gay young officers, and I have no doubt they had some fun at my expense, for I must have presented a woful appearance, with my wilted 'Shaker,' my dirty face, and my wet forty-dollar calico dress. . . .

"It was not until seven o'clock the next evening that we were again moving on,—this time not in an ambulance, but in a steamcar, and were soon rushing over the remaining nine miles into Vicksburg. That night I rejoined my family, whom Mr. Baum helped me to find.

"My father and mother had stayed in the cave on the hillside until he too was taken ill, when they moved to the house of a planter a few miles farther out. There they remained for a few weeks, but the shells began to reach them there, and they were then, by General Grant's personal direction, moved to a plantation three miles farther back. Here they stayed, living forlorn existences until the surrender."

At the time of my Vicksburg interview with General Grant, Mr. and Mrs. Shirley had just been moved to the plantation by General Grant's orders, but instead of finding shelter in the planter's house as General Grant doubtless

expected, the feeling between neighbors, even, was so strong that these Union sympathizers were left to shift as best they could in the squalor of the servants' quarters. It was here that I found them, Grant having lent me a horse that I might ride out and deliver my letters. This of course was before the daughter returned from Clinton. After the surrender of Vicksburg, Grant saw that the family was provided with a temporary home within the city. On my way to visit them at the plantation a shell fell in the road just in front of me and exploded. The cannoneers had located me with considerable definiteness.

The narrative of the Shirley family has seemed to me of sufficient general interest to be reproduced here as a rather vivid picture of an unusual war-time experience. I am willing to admit, however, that my judgment in the matter may possibly be somewhat biased by the fact that my own interest in the family was something more than general. I afterwards married Miss Shirley. However that may be, the story gives me the opportunity to say that Grant's kindness to this much-distressed household was typical of the unfailing readiness with which he relieved suffering whenever he could possibly do so, — regardless, one might say, of the political faith of the sufferer. Those of us who witnessed that trait in the great General can never testify to the truth of this too often.

Already he had found time and inclination to make plans for the Negro population in and around Vicksburg, which in the event of the surrender would become our charge. He told me in one of our talks of a fertile stretch of land known as Davis Bend, — a peninsula, called Palmyra Bend upon the maps, — lying some twenty-five miles

below Vicksburg and formed by a huge bend of the Mississippi. This land had belonged to Joe Davis,—the brother of Jefferson Davis,—to General Quitman, and other prominent Southerners. Jeff Davis had himself received some thousand acres of land from his brother, and had built him a house on the property. It was General Grant's desire that these plantations should be occupied by the freedmen, and, to quote his own words, "become a Negro paradise." This plan the Freedmen's Department was able later to carry out.

During my final call at headquarters preparatory to my return to Memphis, General Grant intimated to me the probability of what I might hear — perhaps on the Fourth of July — as I went up the river.

I left Vicksburg on the second. As I went up the Mississippi toward Helena, word reached me of a successful engagement there. Our troops indeed were just coming in from the fight of July 4. They were full of excitement and eager to know all that I could tell them of the great Vicksburg campaign.

At Memphis I set my affairs in order — turning over my authority to my assistant, Samuel Thomas, who should represent me in my absence — and continued my journey northward. When I reached Cairo, I was met by the news of the terrible engagement at Gettysburg, and later I was overtaken by the long-hoped-for report that Vicksburg had fallen. That was a wonderful trip. The enthusiasm of the country was manifested in every city, town, and homestead. It was in the midst of stirring scenes that I pursued my way to Washington, and Lincoln.

CHAPTER VII

First interviews with President Lincoln. His power of gauging men. His anecdotes. His tender-heartedness. The American Freedmen Inquiry Commission.

WHEN I reached Washington, I went at once to a relative of mine, a Dr. Jones, who was one of the managers of the National Hotel, then a much frequented hostelry in the vicinity of Pennsylvania Avenue and Sixth Street. The Doctor was well informed in regard to the conduct of affairs at the White House, and although his political convictions were opposed to mine, he expressed the liveliest interest in my mission and gave me all the information he could to assist me. He told me at what hour the President would be most apt to be at liberty. Armed with the letter from General Grant and with my report, I presented myself at the White House. There was no delay, no obstructive formality. The messenger took my letter at once to the President and promptly ushered me into Mr. Lincoln's apartment.

My call was so timed that the multitude of visitors as well as the clerks — "the boys," as Mr. Lincoln called them — were gone for the day, and the President was sitting by his office desk alone. His cordial manner put me at once at my ease. There was not the slightest affectation, nor assumption of superiority. We talked with the

utmost freedom, but I found myself subjected to the keenest investigation that it has ever been my experience to undergo. Mr. Lincoln immediately began to ask me questions about his "fighting General," as he already called Grant, passing from him to the consideration of other men whom he trusted, — to the personal characters of various subordinate officers, and what they did and said. The searching inquiries never for a moment became trivial; the motive behind each was too formidable for that. During the whole of my acquaintance with the President, he seemed to me to be doing all in his power to measure the personal character of prominent men. He gauged the strength of his armies by their leaders. He seemed constantly to be taking these measurements, and when he had taken them, to lay them aside in that wonderful brain of his for future use. He was equally keen in his investigation of the personal traits of certain Negroes, the circumstances of whose lives had brought them into prominence. He questioned me in regard to those who were coming into our lines: What was their object; how far did they understand the changes that were coming to them, and what were they able to do for themselves? At this time, it must be remembered, the Negro character was a subject about which, among Northerners, at least, the wildest conjectures were current. Mr. Lincoln's amazing powers of observation and his intuitive sense gave him a mastery over the question which very few possessed. His early experiences, though they were but slight, had left him with impressions of such vividness and fidelity to the truth that he was able still to rely upon them. He was eager for details of Vicksburg, and his references to the Mississippi

River proved that his memories of it had stayed by him, filling his mind with the significance of the commercial influence of the great waterway, and of its effect not only upon the country at large, but particularly upon the Negro population, which, now that the Mississippi was open from its source to its mouth, would swarm to the river as a channel of escape into the North.

After the President had been questioning me for some time, he quickly turned the conversation one side, as if he realized the severity of his catechism, and asked me what I had seen since my arrival in the city. I reported a visit to the Capitol, then in process of construction, whereupon Mr. Lincoln asked what the workmen were doing. I told him that they were about to raise the body of the statue of Liberty to the dome, and that on the Senate wing they were preparing the pillars for installation. The President remarked that there were some people who thought the work on the Capitol ought to stop on account of the war, people who begrudged the expenditure, and the detention of the workmen from the army. He went on to say that in his judgment the finishing of the Capitol would be a symbol to the Nation of the preservation of the Union. "If people see the Capitol going on, it is a sign we intend the Union shall go on." He expressed his belief in the final triumph of the Union cause. There would be reverses and much bloodshed, but finally the Union army, he felt assured, would be victorious.

At another time he interrupted his inquiries to ask if Grant had told me of the raid made upon him—the President—in Washington. I replied that I had not heard of it.

"Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "you know a raid in Washington is different from what you military men mean by a raid. With you it is an attack by the enemy, — the capture of soldiers and supplies; with us it is an attack by our friends in Congress seeking to influence a change in policy. A company of Congressmen came to me to protest that Grant ought not to be retained as a commander of American citizens. I asked what was the trouble. They said he was not fit to command such men. I asked why, and they said he sometimes drank too much and was unfit for such a position. I then began to ask them if they knew what he drank, what brand of whiskey he used, telling them most seriously that I wished they would find out. They conferred with each other and concluded they could not tell what brand he used. I urged them to ascertain and let me know, for if it made fighting generals like Grant, I should like to get some of it for distribution."

The President's specific inquiries about my own work were particularly keen. As we talked, he glanced at portions of the written report which lay before him, and said he would take it with him to the Soldiers' Home, where he went each night for the quiet and comparative coolness he enjoyed there. Against Mr. Lincoln's wishes, the Secretary of War had insisted upon a squad of cavalry accompanying the President to and from the city as his guard. The officer in charge of this cavalry escort reported at the accustomed time and before my interview was over. I took my leave, however, the President directing me to call at an early hour the following morning. Outside, I saw him as he passed in the carriage, and was much impressed by the extreme awkwardness of his appearance,

— so contrary was it to what might be expected of the great ruler of a great people. Mr. Lincoln's dignity and impressiveness were certainly a triumph of the spirit over the flesh.

I can never tell the full effect upon me of this first interview with President Lincoln. We have grown used in this later day to listening to the accounts of his overshadowing determination to save the Union, of his deep conviction of the righteousness of the principles fundamental to liberty, but to those of us who came in contact with the man himself there was vouchsafed a revelation of personal power transcending any similar experience which we might know. It was not only the commanding greatness of his policy which impressed one: the minuteness and variety of his information, the ease and versatility with which everything was treated, inspired the deepest confidence as to the fitness of the man for the supreme emergency in which he was acting.

According to my appointment, I returned to the White House the next morning and received the copy of my report. The President left me in no doubt as to the satisfaction with which he had read the information contained therein. He spoke at some length about the efforts that had been made in the East to meet the Negro question, — how he had urged deportation and colonization, and of the failure of such efforts to solve the difficulty. His sympathy with the suffering caused by some of the mistakes was very evident. He told me, for instance, that the Negroes in the Cow Island settlement on the coast of Hayti were suffering intensely from a pest of "jiggers" from which there seemed to be no escape or protection.

His distress was as keen as it was sincere, and I have often thought of it as an illustration of his kindness of heart, which found no detail too insignificant upon which to expend itself. The spectacle of the President of the United States, conducting the affairs of the Nation in the midst of civil war, and genuinely affected by the discomfort occasioned a little group of Negroes by an insect no bigger than a pinhead, was a spectacle that has stayed by me all my life.

Lincoln referred on one occasion, I remember, to the half whimsical satisfaction and the relief felt by the North when Butler — as he thought with great fitness — first called the slaves of the disloyal “contraband of war.” The President also informed me during this interview that he desired me to report to a committee, composed of Dr. S. G. Howe of Boston, the well-known philanthropist, Colonel McKaye of New York, and Robert Dale Owen of Indiana, a former member of Congress. Mr. Lincoln had previously told me of this body, which, he said, had been appointed to consider the entire subject of our policy toward the Negro in the present emergency. The Commission — known officially as the American Freedmen Inquiry Commission — had recently been in conference in New York, and the President desired me to go there and meet them.

As soon, therefore, as my duties in Washington were over, I left for New York to report to the Commission then in session. Some general knowledge of the treatment accorded to the Negroes in the Department of the Tennessee had already reached the Commissioners. They were preparing to follow their first report with a fuller

statement, and were glad to receive further details. I left my report with them at their request, and after carefully considering the facts set forth, and questioning me personally, they concluded that our experience in the Valley was a very valuable contribution to solving the problem of how the freedmen should be treated. The Commission had nothing essentially new to suggest, but they felt from the first the necessity of some central point of control which should insure united and uniform effort, and their representations did much toward preparing the way for the formation of the Freedmen's Bureau. The feeling that men of sound judgment, and training in humanitarian work, should find themselves in sympathy, from the theoretic standpoint, with the measures I had tried to put in practice, was a great encouragement to me. I returned to my duties much heartened by the approbation of the President and the Commission.

In thinking over my interview with Mr. Lincoln I came to the conclusion that apart from his shrewd catechism of me with reference to the work I had been doing — which was of course the reason of my approaching him at all — his close questioning in regard to Grant was the most remarkable feature of the interview. From that day to this there has been a growing conviction in my mind that the President meant to find out what his "fighting General" thought of his policy. What Lincoln thought of Grant was pretty well determined, but true to his habit he let slip no opportunity by which he might gain a clearer view of the character of the man he was dealing with or of the march of those events which in so great a measure he himself controlled.

CHAPTER VIII

Return to the Valley. Meeting with Grant at Cairo. Banquet at Memphis in Grant's honor. Down the river to Vicksburg with Grant and his staff. The General talks of himself. Tales of his intemperance.

UPON my arrival at Cairo on my way back to my duties in the Valley, I found General Grant with his staff on board his headquarters' boat. He makes no reference to this trip to Cairo in his "Memoirs," and I have never heard any adequate explanation of his presence there; but there he was, and a vast satisfaction it was to me to see him. The General's boat was just about to go down the river to Memphis, where a reception and banquet were to be held at the Gayoso House, in celebration of his great victory, and it was arranged that I should accompany him. On the way we talked of the two brilliant victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. The staff were eager for news from the East, and I regaled them with all the details that had come to my ears in Washington and *en route*. I had met many army officers and had had a number of interesting conversations about the recent campaign on the Potomac. Grant was particularly anxious to know what reasons were understood to have influenced General Meade not to pursue General Lee across the Potomac, — or rather what induced him not to prevent Lee from cross-

ing the Potomac at all. Grant seemed never to be altogether persuaded that Meade was justified in not following up his advantage at that point.¹ Meade, of course, was harshly criticized at the time, and has been since. General Grant, too, it will be remembered, was subjected to much adverse criticism in regard to his policy of paroling Pemberton's troops instead of holding them as prisoners of war. He states his reasons with great force and clearness in his "Memoirs," and he stated them in almost the same language at the time. He told me, I remember, that it was his conviction that comparatively few Confederates captured at Vicksburg would be found in future engagements. In my own trips up and down the river, I had occasion in a small way to note the temper of the Confederate troops who from time to time had surrendered to our forces, and I came to the conclusion that many—especially those involved in the Vicksburg campaign—had had enough of the war. Indeed not a few of them told me so in as many words. These men, even when they boasted, and with reason, of their own prowess, were disposed on the whole to marvel at the seeming ease with

¹ Mr. F. A. Flower, the author of an unpublished biography of Stanton, and the biographer of General Herman Haupt,—at one time Chief of Transportation during the Civil War, and famous for the construction of the Hoosac Tunnel,—says that he once questioned General Lee as to what would have been the result had General Meade pursued him after the battle of Gettysburg. Lee told Mr. Flower that Meade would have taken him at a great disadvantage, and gave Flower the impression that one of the darkest hours of the Confederacy had been considerably illuminated by Meade's decision not to pursue. General Haupt states in his own volume of reminiscences that so great was his anxiety to have our advantage at Gettysburg followed up that he went himself on his private engine to plead with Meade to pursue Lee at once and prevent him from crossing the Potomac. General Haupt always believed that such a move would have settled the conflict at once.

which they had been defeated. A group captured at Champion's Hill were plainly bewildered by the tactics Grant had used against them. His blows, as they told me in describing the battle, fell upon them from all sides, until at last, in some unaccountable way, they found themselves completely overpowered.

The uninterrupted journey down the river gave an unwonted opportunity for conversation. As we steamed past Belmont and Columbus Grant told me the story of the battle of Belmont. It seemed to me then, as I listened to the narrative from his own lips, and it has seemed to me ever since, that the management of those raw troops at Belmont indicated to a very remarkable degree the characteristics which later put Grant in command of the Union forces. Then, as ever, he showed that he understood himself completely, — by that I mean his aims and the methods by which he meant to fulfil them; he understood his opponent; whatever in his surroundings he could not be absolutely familiar with beforehand, he was on the alert to master at the very first opportunity (and it was the lack of that very quality, by the way, which lost Waterloo to Napoleon); and finally, he was careful and considerate of his troops. Rob Grant of all his other characteristics as a leader of armies, and these qualities, manifested so early in his career, would still constitute him the great general he was.

Grant has reported the battle of Belmont so fully in his book that I shall not attempt to reproduce it here, although its recital was one of the most interesting moments of my intercourse with the General. One fact, however, is worthy of note, because it testifies so plainly to his permanent value

as an historian. The language in which he told it then — calm, dispassionate, yet full of appreciation of the dramatic and the humorous features of the narrative — was almost identically the same in which the story reappears in his “Memoirs.”¹ Horace Porter, in his “Campaigning with Grant,” speaks of the literalness of Grant’s mind and the scrupulous regard for truth which obliged him to give to each detail the same conscientious consideration as he bestowed upon the most essential statement. This quality — redeemed by the sense of proportion which men of his type seldom lack — stood him in good stead when, after long years crowded with new interests, he came to write of the events of the past.

The staff had many stories to tell me of the skirmishes in which the colored troops organized by Thomas had engaged in the neighborhood of Lake Providence, Milliken’s Bend, and Young’s Point, and in which they had maintained themselves with so much gallantry. The General himself told me of the situation about Vicksburg, where there were, so he said, some twenty thousand Negroes demanding my attention, to say nothing of the thousands that must be cared for in and around Natchez. He urged me again to take command of one of the regiments then forming, but as yet I could not see that such a step was necessary to the performance of my duty, and I was determined to avoid it if possible.

The banquet at Memphis in honor of General Grant was largely attended by officers and citizens. I remember the two long tables at which the guests were seated, and across one end of these the table reserved for the General and

¹ Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, Vol. I, p. 269.

his immediate staff. I was given a seat a little down the table on the right, from which point I had the General's place at the head of the table directly under my eye. I had had opportunity enough to assure myself of General Grant's temperate habits, but the rumors that circulated freely in the country made me watchful of all that occurred. His wine glasses and those of General Rawlins, his chief of staff, remained inverted throughout the dinner, although there was even more than the usual freedom in the use of wines among the other guests. Personally I never saw wine at Grant's headquarters; Rawlins was a total abstinence man, — so much so that he was thought by his friends to have hastened his death by refusing to take stimulants, — and all whiskey was sent by his order to the hospitals.

After the banquet I was separated from the other guests for a short time while I attended to getting my baggage on board, for we were to leave for Vicksburg early the next morning. Somewhat late, as I passed through the cabin to my stateroom, I found General Grant sitting by the table, smoking. He spoke to me, and I lingered a few moments in conversation. As we were chatting together, other officers came in, among them an older man of high rank who proceeded to regale the General — young as he was — with a somewhat unsavory anecdote intended to amuse him. As the character of the story became evident Grant grew plainly uneasy, and before it had reached the conclusion he blushed to his hair, although in deference to the age and rank of the speaker he did not permit himself to make any comment. The offending officer, however, seeing the effect of his story, withdrew as quickly as he could.

It is safe to say he never again tried the experiment in Grant's presence.

The other men dropped off to bed, but General Grant was in a communicative mood, and I was ready enough to listen to his stories of his early life in the old army. His conversation had a never-failing charm for me, and nothing pleased me better than to hear him talk about himself. He told me, I remember, of his experiences in the Mexican War, and the following years when he was stationed on the Pacific Coast at Vancouver. Here it was that he became familiar through personal experience with all branches of the service. As commanding officer he would sometimes find himself in the somewhat amusing predicament of indorsing papers which he had previously drawn up in the capacity of quartermaster or commissary. His familiarity with the details of all the various departments gave him a tremendous advantage when the necessity arose during the Civil War of training the members of his staff in their separate duties. Nearly all his staff officers were drawn from civilians who had never had a particle of military training, but nearly all became especially proficient. Rawlins was one of the greatest adjutant-generals in the army, and of Bowers, Grant was wont to say that he never lost a paper. In the course of his reminiscences that evening Grant referred to one man who stood out in his memory of those Western days as a man absolutely to be trusted in the discharge of his duty. The officer who had so impressed the General was a certain paymaster named Eaton whom I met at Frémont's headquarters. Grant told me that he invariably balanced his account at the close of each day, and if a few pennies were lacking to make the account

even, he would supply the deficiency at once from his own pocket. Years afterward, when Grant was President, he told me that he had appointed this man to the post of paymaster in the Department of Oregon. So carefully did Grant — like Lincoln — estimate the men he came in contact with, remember them, and place them where their good qualities were particularly needed. On this same occasion Grant referred to the vice of intemperance, which was so common among the officers in the West, and spoke of its deleterious effect upon the army. This, he remarked, had not a little to do with his decision to resign. He was not able to support his family on the pay he was then drawing, and there was little prospect of rapid advancement, so he determined to cut loose from a life which was full of temptation, without many compensating advantages, and return to his family. He spoke very frankly of the struggle that ensued to provide for his wife and children, — his efforts to develop the farm his father-in-law had given him, of his attempt to earn money as a surveyor, and his final decision to work in his father's store at Galena, at which place the outbreak of the war had found him. There is evidence enough as to the difficulty of those years preceding the war. The General's father had told me when I saw him at Grand Junction that when "Ulysses" got his commission he did not have the money in hand wherewith to purchase his uniform, and in addition to that testimony I remember meeting, quite by chance, just before the close of hostilities, a man who had known Grant in the St. Louis days when he was eking out a precarious livelihood by selling wood which he hauled into town himself. The man was so impressed with the struggle Grant was making,

and with his good sense and pluck, that he told Grant whenever he had a load of wood on his hands for which he wanted to find a customer, to drop it on his premises and he would hold himself responsible for its purchase.

As the General talked to me that night on the river boat, the earlier memories giving place in his narrative to the more recent experiences of the Civil War, and the steps by which he came to assume his present responsibilities and honors, there was not the faintest touch of pride in his references to the changes that had come to him. There was no boasting, no unpleasant reflections upon any one. Although he had had much to suffer that might have been avoided, he referred to the trials and the triumphs of his life as dispassionately as if these had been connected with some one other than himself.

Throughout the long trip from Memphis to Vicksburg these talks with the General became more and more familiar. He told me on one occasion how the story of his drinking originated at Cairo. His headquarters there were on the second floor of an old building and confined to a single room. Employed in either the commissary or the quartermaster's departments — and my memory does not serve me as to which — was an old army officer who was disposed to be offensively loquacious and convivial. In order to escape the old fellow's importunities, and also because the room at best was overcrowded, Grant had his own desk and chair moved into what was little more than an adjoining hallway. The loquacious officer took Grant's refusals to drink with him as a personal grievance, and promptly circulated the report that Grant had withdrawn into the little room in order to have his own drinks unob-

served and unmolested. Unfortunately Grant, upon assuming command at Cairo, had been obliged to offend the newspaper men — chiefly representatives of the New York papers — by restricting the information conveyed to them for publication. This had become necessary because the discipline when Grant first took hold had grown so lax that intercommunication between the Union and Confederate armies was carried on to an unwarrantable extent. Finding their war items curtailed, the correspondents took their revenge and filled out the columns of their respective papers by quoting the story circulated by the old officer whose feelings had been wounded by Grant's austerity. It so happened that I had met the same group of newspaper men in St. Louis when they had come up from Fort Donelson, and General Grant's story as he told it to me agreed perfectly with what the correspondents themselves had told me. I saw a good deal of them, — talked with them collectively and one at a time, — and their unanimous testimony was to the effect that Grant himself was irreproachable, whatever might appear to the contrary in their papers. They had printed "the news" and left it to the public to decide what to accept and what to disbelieve.

These conversations in which the General told me so freely of his own life were as unexpected to me as they were delightful. I was particularly impressed by the frankness with which he referred to the accusation of intemperance made against him. It was plain that the army life in Washington Territory and Oregon had been full of temptations, and it is more than probable that he followed the example of the other officers while there. To escape from

the environment was certainly one motive for his leaving the army, and I feel impelled to state as plainly as I can that in my judgment Grant's temperance was unimpeachable after he had re-entered the service and started upon his great career.

CHAPTER IX

Arrival at Vicksburg. Thirty thousand contrabands to be cared for near that point. Organization, by Grant's advice, of the colored invalid corps, or "Home Guards." Appointed Colonel of the 63d United States Colored Infantry. Value of these regiments to the Freedmen's Department.

IT was the 28th of August when our boat brought us to Vicksburg, and at once I found myself confronted with a vast amount of work which must be undertaken on behalf of the Negroes. In my diary for that date, after a brief personal entry, I find this single sentence: "How appalling my labor here!" Captain Thomas, in whose hands I had left the affairs of the freedmen during my absence in Washington, had been so obviously in ill health that Grant had noticed his condition and had insisted upon his taking time to rest and recuperate. He soon returned to his duties, however, and together we attacked the problem of caring for the destitute and of organizing into efficient squads those Negroes who were capable of working. It was one of the busiest and most difficult periods of my life, but we were able gradually to effect a great deal, both for the individual Negro and for the Government.

About a year after our work in Vicksburg was inaugurated, I wrote a letter of a semi-official character, describing among other things the scenes which were constantly before us at the beginning of the Vicksburg period. I

quote, with slight verbal change, the following passages from that contemporary record:¹

“The scenes were appalling: the refugees were crowded together, sickly, disheartened, dying on the streets, not a family of them all either well sheltered, clad, or fed; no physicians, no medicines, no hospitals; many of the persons who had been charged with feeding them either sick or dead. Such scenes, if any, were calculated to make one doubt the policy of emancipation. The distress was incident upon stupendous military operations; the whites suffered as well as the blacks, and all were temporarily fed by the Government. The only industry found among twenty thousand — there were ten thousand more scattered on the opposite bank of the river — was that performed by twelve men with axes. . . . The ideas of the people had not been improved by idleness and association with the army. The great multitude were unprepared to work beyond supplying their immediate necessities. As laborers they came and went regardless of their agreements or the wishes of their employers. Housekeepers often had a new cook for each meal in the day. . . . Their minds were not adjusted to the new situation. Laborers were so abundant, Southern prejudice against paying blacks was so great, that it required almost superhuman efforts on the part of my officers to secure payment, and trustworthiness in service. . . . The results are, on the whole, very favorable. We introduced no great machinery. Our aim was, by the simplest principles and expedients to bring labor and its rewards into their natural relations to the people. . . . Artisans — those who have been house or body servants — have largely gathered in the cities. They are not so far an exception to the rest of humanity as to be free from vice and crime. . . . They have not that immaculate humanity which never idles, lies, or steals; they are not free from family quarrels, or murder, or from poverty and distress, but in all our cities they are an interesting industrial class, — manageable, and susceptible of improvement. Many more among them have learned to read and write than among the whites. Any one of a candid and unprejudiced mind

¹ Letter to Levi Coffin, Vicksburg, Miss., July 5, 1864.

cannot look over the same people now and fail to pronounce emancipation a success. Accomplished in a state of peace, gradually and by the action of the master, there would be less suffering. But the slaveocracy, over-riding the better judgment of many in the South, forced events, and common sense and interest, as well as Christian principle, prompt all to make the best of the consequences. The great social and civil wound inflicted by the rebellion can be healed only by sloughing off the evils of slavery. Government and benevolence must throw in the restorative elements of intelligence, virtue, and industry."

On our meeting at Cairo, General Grant had told me of the death of Mr. Shirley, who had not long survived the fall of Vicksburg, — a victory to which the old gentleman had looked forward with such ardent patriotism. The long walk back to his wife and son, and the exposure in the cave on the hillside, had proved more than he could endure. I went at once upon my arrival to see Mrs. Shirley, whom Grant had established temporarily in a deserted house in Vicksburg. She told me that the General had promised to recommend her young son Quincy for an appointment to West Point.

Not long after our return to Vicksburg General Grant went on the ill-starred visit to General Banks, at New Orleans, during which he received the only serious injury which befell him in the whole course of the war. His splendid horsemanship was powerless to save him, for the horse he was riding — a vicious animal and little used, presented to General Banks by his friends in Massachusetts — became terrified at a locomotive and fell, with his rider under him. The General was laid up for a week or more at New Orleans, and even after his return to Vicksburg on September 16, it was some time before he could leave

his bed without assistance. During this time I saw him frequently at his headquarters, and he took occasion again to urge upon me the advisability of my assuming command of a regiment of colored troops. This was all the satisfaction I could get from him when I once more requested the revocation of the orders under which I was acting, and asked to be returned to my regiment and my profession. I was obliged to admit that I was embarrassed in the performance of my duties by the lack of military rank, and that the proposition made by Grant would much facilitate my operations. We talked over the situation very thoroughly. It was General Grant's intention to have me make the organization under me a sort of Home Guard, — a colored military force, within the regular army, which should perform the duties required of troops in protecting the plantations, the wood-cutting operations, and the various enterprises undertaken beneath our superintendence. He pointed out that I need not assemble the regiment, but distribute it in small groups throughout the Valley, wherever the safety and comfort of the inhabitants should indicate the need. After weighing the matter some time, I consented. Accordingly General L. Thomas appointed me Colonel of the 9th Louisiana Colored Infantry, then forming, and issued an order, from which I quote only the following:

SPECIAL ORDERS,
No. 92.

GOODRICH LANDING, LA.,
October 2, 1863.

[Extract.]

II. The following Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Privates are announced as Officers of the Ninth Regiment Louisiana Volunteers of African Descent. They will be detailed from

108 GRANT, LINCOLN, AND THE FREEDMEN

their respective Regiments, to raise the troops, and as rapidly as Companies, Battalions and the Regiment are organized they will be mustered into the new Regiment.

Colonel: JOHN EATON, Jr., Chaplain 27th Ohio Volunteers.

Lieutenant-Colonel: SAMUEL THOMAS, Captain 27th Ohio Volunteers.

Major: WILLIAM G. SARGENT, Quartermaster Serg't 7th Kans. Cav.

Adjutant with rank of First Lieutenant: 1st Lieutenant, GEORGE YOUNG, 27th Ohio Volunteers.

Quartermaster, with rank of First Lieutenant: Private BENJAMIN K. JOHNSON, Co. "K" 27th Ohio Volunteers.

Surgeon: D. O. McCORD, M.D.

[The Order continues with a list of the captains and subordinate officers.]

III. When fully organized the troops will be reported to Major-General U. S. Grant, Commanding Department of the Tennessee.

By order of the Secretary of War.

(Signed) L. THOMAS,

Colonel JOHN EATON, Jr.,

Adjutant-General.

Com'd'g. 9th La. Vol. A. D.

In view of the proposed character of the regiment, we accepted as soldiers men who, though they were of a lower grade of physique than that which is acceptable in the regular army, were competent to fulfil all the duties of the camp wherever they might be stationed, and to resist attacks from the bands of guerillas that infested the country and threatened the plantations. The regiment was filled very rapidly, and an order for a second regiment of like character was issued. Of this regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Thomas was appointed Colonel on my recommendation. An extract from the order follows:

GOODRICH LANDING, LA.

November 5, 1863.

SPECIAL ORDERS,
No. 92.

[Extract.]

IV. Colonel John Eaton, Jr., 9th Regiment Louisiana Volunteers of African Descent, is hereby authorized to raise a Second Regiment of Colored Troops in the Department of the Tennessee to be denominated the 7th Regiment Louisiana Volunteers of African Descent. The Regiment will be composed of such men as may be incapacitated for active service in the field but who are otherwise fitted for ordinary garrison duty. Colonel Eaton is authorized to recruit for this Regiment in any of the camps for colored people within this Department, including Arkansas, and all Commanding Officers are directed to facilitate him in his endeavors to fill up this Regiment with as little delay as possible.

.
By order of the Secretary of War.

(Signed) L. THOMAS,
Adjutant-General.

Colonel JOHN EATON, Jr.,
9th La. Vol. A. D.

Soon after their organization it was deemed advisable to change the names of these two regiments — along with others — and accordingly Order No. 7 was issued by General Thomas on March 11, 1864. Thereafter the regiments were known respectively as the 63d and 64th United States Colored Infantry. Later, my brother L. B. Eaton, who had served as staff officer at Chattanooga, was appointed Colonel of the 69th United States Colored Infantry. The regiment was partly organized, and the officers of the staff were appointed and had already been assigned to duty as superintendents of the freed labor in the Valley, — so great was the demand for such service, — but before the full regimental complement had been secured, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox, the order to cease enlisting was

issued, and the uncompleted regiment was mustered out of service.

It will be inferred by the foregoing that at least one end served by the formation of the colored invalid corps, or "Home Guards" as they were informally called, was to secure a group of officers whose particular duty it should be to act as officers of freedmen, but who at the same time, should belong to a definite and united military organization. My assistants—whatever their rank—had previously been detached temporarily from regimental service upon undertaking the work for the freedmen. With the new order of things, however, the superintendents of freedmen were themselves officers in an organization especially intended to serve as a vehicle for the fulfilment of their duties. We found this to be a great advantage in our work, which from that time on became more systematic and efficient in character. It was indeed this military organization, existing in a sense independently of the will of any Department commander, which gave unity, security, and stability to our work for the freedmen in the Valley. Even after Grant's departure from the Mississippi region, the coming of commanders some of whom were sympathetic with our efforts, and some of whom were not, affected our labors less than it would have done without this minor military organization through which to work.

The organization's efficiency, as well as some of the difficulties with which we dealt, will be made more clear by the following extract from an order issued by General L. Thomas from Goodrich Landing, Louisiana, November 5, 1863:

SPECIAL ORDERS,

No. 94.

Col. John Eaton, Jr., 9th Regiment Louisiana Volunteers of African Descent, is continued as General Superintendent of Freedmen for the Department of the Tennessee, including Arkansas.

He will assign the Field and Staff of the Regiment raised by him for the supervision and protection of these people and their industry, to duty as his General Assistants, and the companies and their commanders to local duty. All Assistant Superintendents will be subject to his order.

This supervision will embrace the guardianship of the freed people, their registration; all necessary permits and contracts for labor with private parties, lessees, officers, citizens, or others, the provision of industry for them in camp or on plantations to be worked by the infirm, vagrant or idle, and all others necessarily or temporarily in charge of the Government.

No freed people will be recruited or ordered out of camp excepting through the Officers in charge.

Superintendents will encourage the people to answer calls to industry by voluntary agreement to labor, and enforce the inviolability of the agreement.

To prevent the frequent infringement of the interests of these people, and secure proper uniformity to the action of the Government, there will be no change of the regulations, forms of contract, permits, etc., excepting through the General Superintendent.

Whenever the General Superintendent shall assign a commissioned officer of his command to a local or district Superintendent, as Acting Assistant Quartermaster and Commissary of freedmen, supplies will be turned over in bulk.

The A. Q. M. and Commissary of freedmen will issue these supplies on such returns as may be ordered by the proper Superintendent.

No rations will be issued for the use of the free people except on the approval of the properly authorized Superintendent.

The conclusion of the order provides for matters which do not concern us here.

I have dwelt somewhat in detail upon these regiments composing the colored invalid corps because they represent a distinct though humble phase of the service, the usefulness of which deserves to be recorded and fixed in the public mind. By means of this minor organization about twenty-five hundred men were added to the military forces in the Valley before the surrender of General Lee. The bravery of the colored troops who fought in the larger engagements, such as those at Port Hudson or Milliken's Bend, thrilled the country at the time and is in little danger of being forgotten by later generations, but the humbler duty of safeguarding the plantations from assaults which were often vindictive and particularly cruel, the task of protecting the women and children, the aged and infirm, — these were services which devolved upon men debarred by physical incapacity from the more heroic campaigns endured by their brothers, but no whit less devoted to the Union, no whit less brave in their loyalty to the cause that had freed them.¹

¹ I am reminded of another service performed by the contrabands which deserves to be better appreciated. It was General Herman Haupt, it will be remembered, who organized the magnificent engineer corps which afterwards accompanied Sherman on his march to the sea. Of the contrabands — one hundred or more in number — who formed the bulk of this corps, General Haupt says in his "Reminiscences" (p. 319): "If there ever should be recognition of their great services [*i. e.* services of the members of the corps], the faithful contrabands will be justly entitled to their share; no other class of men would have exhibited so much patience and endurance under days and nights of continued and sleepless labor." It was to this corps that the Confederates alluded when they were wont to exclaim, "No use tearing up the roads, for old man Sherman will come along and run trains before we are through twisting the rails."

CHAPTER X

Up the river with Grant to Cairo. An autograph letter. Grant assumes command at Chattanooga. Trip to Chattanooga after the battle. Grant's attitude toward the officers of the Army of the Cumberland. His influence on the political situation in Tennessee. His unflagging interest in the refugees and freedmen.

A LITTLE more than one month after General Grant's return from New Orleans the order from the Secretary of War desiring him to report to Cairo was received. On the same day that the order reached him the General took the boat up the river. He was still far from recovered from his injury. No one knew exactly what the order portended, but in view of the threatening situation in the East, we were quite prepared to hear that General Grant was to be sent to conduct the operations around Chattanooga in person. On the strength of this probability I determined to accompany the General as far as Cairo. If it should turn out that he was to be removed from our midst and plunged into a dangerous and engrossing campaign, every moment in which I could be with him and secure his assistance in mapping out the work for the freedmen seemed to me invaluable.

In this connection I am tempted to interrupt my narrative in order to introduce a letter, in Grant's handwriting, which to the best of my recollection was written by General Grant just at this time. Unfortunately the letter is

unsigned and undated, but it is worth presenting for several reasons. Apart from its contents, it testifies to a habit very characteristic of Grant, — that of writing down with his own hand whatever he had to say to subordinates and superiors alike. The following is, I believe, just such a rough draft as he was in the habit of making, to be handed on to his clerks or some member of his staff when it was necessary to have a duplicate or a clean copy made of the communication. The contents of the letter certainly show how genuine was Grant's concern for the welfare of the freedmen, and how generously he gave me all the co-operation and help in his power. If my memory serves me, he addressed this statement to one or more of the military commanders who were scattered throughout the Valley in command of the small detachments of troops left at various points, and who, in the absence of General Sherman, — Grant's successor in the command of the Department of the Tennessee, — would in a measure control the fate of the freedmen. Grant was unfailingly loyal to the interests of the people I represented, and tried thus to make the way smooth for me with the generals he left behind. It is probable that the indorsement was written on board the river boat on the way to Cairo, but of this I cannot speak with any certainty. I quote the letter verbatim:

“I have read the within letter of Col. J. Eaton, Jr., Supt. of Freedmen for the Dept. of the Tenn., and respectfully invite special attention to it. Col. Eaton has worked most faithfully as Supt. of these people for more than one year studying the most practicable means of ameliorating the condition of Freedmen and how to relieve the Govt. as far as practicable of the expense of their maintenance. He is more conversant with this subject than any man

for the securing of Adams' Postoffice
and for the employment of slave labor.

FACSIMILE OF LETTER BY GENERAL U. S. GRANT.

(Written about the time of the Chattanooga campaign.)

depositions - I propose to leave entirely the
management of depositions, as far as the
writing is left to control, but ~~this~~ ^{the} ~~copy~~.

The importance of an early settlement of the
policy to be pursued is so to secure the
labor of Henderson for the coming season
being imminent, and I am, however being at

where his attention can not be called to
the matter, I make this endorsement,

Prof. Eaton will also forward within a day
or two reputation, which he ~~will~~ ^{will} make

I know in the Dept. of the Tenn. and is practical in his ideas. He is perfectly sincere in his labors and has no selfish ends to accomplish and therefore his views are entitled to full weight. The regulations of Freedmen within the different Departments I propose to leave entirely to Commanders of Departments, so far as the Military are left to control, but the importance of an early settlement of Freedmen for the coming season being imminent, and General Sherman being off where his attention cannot be called to the matter, I make this endorsement. Col. Eaton will also forward within a day or two regulations which he will prepare for the leasing of abandoned plantations and for the employment of colored people."

I am inclined to think that the phrase "so far as the Military are left to control" refers to certain regulations of the Treasury Department which, though well-intentioned, gave us infinite trouble later on, and which were about to be enforced just at the time Grant left for Chattanooga.¹

On the 10th of October — to resume my story — Grant left Vicksburg, and I accompanied him on the reverse of that trip down the river which we had made together not many weeks before. Young Quincy Shirley went with us, on his way to a school where he could be fitted for West Point.

General Rawlins, who, as Grant's chief of staff, had charge of our expedition, was constantly urging upon the captain the necessity for haste. The old river boat was rushed along at a speed which seemed as if it might prove fatal at any moment, and the keel would scrape and grind the river bottom in the most disturbing fashion. Six days after our departure we arrived at Cairo. Grant, in pursuance of further instructions which reached him next morn-

¹ These complications are explained at some length in the course of Chapter XII.

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¹ These complications are explained at some length in the course of Chapter XII.

ing, started at once for Louisville *via* Indianapolis, at which point, it will be remembered, his train was stopped by a messenger just as it was drawing out from the city, and he was informed that the Secretary of War, whom he had not yet met in person, was entering the station and desired to see him. Mr. Stanton accompanied Grant to Louisville and gave him the order putting him in command of the newly created Division of the Mississippi, — composed of the Departments of the Ohio, the Cumberland, and the Tennessee, — and relieving Rosecrans of his command. Thus was Grant fairly launched upon the great undertaking of rescuing from defeat the Union troops at Chattanooga.

Immediately upon Grant's departure from Cairo I returned to Vicksburg, where we labored unremittingly at our appointed task. I was obliged, of course, to make frequent trips up and down the Mississippi and the Arkansas rivers, superintending and investigating our operations, but our headquarters were now at Vicksburg, and that city may be said to have been during this period our most exacting field of endeavor. So many problems arose which it seemed advisable to submit to the judgment of General Grant that after the passage of some months I again sought him out, leaving Vicksburg on February 9, and going all the way to Chattanooga to see him. I was also able at the same time to confer with General Lorenzo Thomas.

At Chattanooga I found Grant with his mind full of the scenes through which he and the army had been passing. He told me of his efforts, on his arrival, to get food and medicine for the suffering troops. He described the ma-

nœuvres by which Hooker's force at Bridgeport crossed the Tennessee River to the southern side, and marched up to Brown's Ferry, while General Palmer, moving down on the north side, held the road in the rear, — Hooker arriving in time to support the troops in command of General Hazen that had floated down the river under cover of the night, and surprised and captured the Confederate pickets at Brown's Ferry. General Smith — whom Grant already referred to as "Baldy" — marched on the north side of the river direct from Chattanooga and had his men ferried over two hours after Hazen's arrival. A detail of Smith's command promptly constructed the pontoon bridge so that the new outpost in the Lookout Valley was connected with the main divisions of the army still centred at Chattanooga. By this operation the river was opened to the Union forces from Lookout Valley to Bridgeport, and supplies could be brought up within a few miles of Chattanooga by steamer as well as by a wagon road, on the north side of the Tennessee, which had previously been harassed by the enemy and rendered dangerous to our forces.

Grant went on in his enthusiasm to talk about the great battle which followed this preparatory manœuvre in about a month's time, — when the troops had regained health and courage. He was unstinted in his praise of the gallant conduct of both officers and men.

I had a brother, L. B. Eaton, to whom I have already referred, on the staff of one of the brigade commanders — Colonel, afterwards General, Harker of the 65th Ohio — in Sheridan's division, serving under George H. Thomas at that time. His account of the charge up Missionary

Ridge, in which he took part, is still vivid in my mind. He told me, I remember, that the officers, on reaching the crest where the enemy had established a battery, flung themselves upon the captured field guns, embracing them in a grotesque passion of triumph. The wave of emotional excitement which had swept them up the hillside under fire of the enemy shattered itself thus fantastically at the summit when the crisis was over.

The Nation had been tremendously stirred by the victories at Chattanooga, and Grant must have been made to feel that he was the hero of the hour, but he talked of it all as calmly and simply as if he had been a subordinate and an observer merely. From the talks I had with Grant at this time, the strongest impression I received was of the dignity and manliness of his attitude toward the officers who had shared with him the triumphs of the past campaign. He had come to Chattanooga to assume command over a group of men who knew him for the most part by reputation only; he had put into triumphant execution plans which had been in part labored over and prepared for by other men; he had wrested victory out of a situation which had come perilously near destroying the pluck and fortitude of the army, but his fair dealing and generous appreciation of merit wherever it was to be found had completely won for him the confidence of every man in the combined commands, from his generals to the rank and file of the army. His appreciation of the work done by General Thomas and General Smith was particularly keen. Of Thomas I remember he once said that one of the few qualities of a great general in which he was lacking was confidence in himself.

Another fact which vastly impressed me was the readiness which General Grant still manifested to listen and give aid to the cause of the Negroes in the Valley. There were not a few division commanders to whom the subject of the Negro was always an unwelcome topic, but Grant, although he had left the field of my work far behind him and was facing an entirely new and dissimilar situation himself, was none the less willing to take up the thread of his thought once more and discuss with me problems which only his strong sense of humanity and justice could have invested with interest for him at that time. The colored refugee problem in eastern Tennessee did not begin to assume the proportions which he had had to deal with in and around Memphis or Vicksburg, and indeed throughout the territory under my jurisdiction, but the prejudice of the whites against the Negro was even more acute. In the country about Chattanooga and all through eastern Tennessee the refugees were principally of that interesting class in the South — descendants of the sturdy Scotch-Irish emigrants, some of whom had fallen victims to the indentured labor system — to whom slavery had not extended a gracious hand and who had suffered from the aristocratic form of society which the institution had set up. Too poor to profit by its advantages, these people had gradually found themselves cut off from possession of the more productive lands, and practically confined to their mountain homes and “poor lands,” — meagre in equipment and productivity as these often were. It was one of Mr. Lincoln’s wise dreams to put this population into direct communication with Northern enterprise and influences, and to this end he would have had a road built into

the heart of their region from Cincinnati. The building of this road he would have made one of the duties of the army early in the war. The military commanders, however, discouraged the notion, and gave the President to understand that the soldiers had enlisted to fight for the Nation, not to build roads. The great Calhoun, it will be remembered, had cherished a similar scheme for connecting Charleston with the immense enterprises centering about Cincinnati and Chicago. How much such a plan might have accomplished in obviating the gravitation apart of the two sections of the country can now only be inferred, but any one who has observed the great impetus to Southern development afforded in later days by the railroad reaching south from Cincinnati will at least be inclined to speculate upon the subject. As it was, in spite of the splendid loyalty of many of the mountaineers, the Confederacy vied with the Union in securing the sympathy of the population of eastern Tennessee, under circumstances which, even after the downfall of Isham G. Harris's government, favored the South because of the easy communication which the region had with Richmond. After Grant's arrival, however, the people began to accustom themselves to turn to him as to the representative of Government rather than to the authorities at Richmond, and the military government of Andrew Johnson derived much vitality from Grant's wise and careful manipulation. From the time of his arrival on the scene he had carefully been inducing and fostering a Union sentiment by every means in his power. The refugee question was largely in the hands of the Military Governor, but Grant was keenly alive to the fate of the mountain whites who came to his lines for sympathy and protection.

The Rev. J. M. Walden, corresponding secretary of the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission, commenting on the assistance rendered his society by the Freedmen's Department in the Mississippi Valley, refers specifically to Grant's efforts in middle Tennessee. "We received but little cooperation from any officers there," reports Mr. Walden, "till General Grant assumed command of the department. A store-room was then immediately secured at Nashville; an order given for the transportation of all supplies, and another for rations for our teachers." Many individuals out of the comparatively small number of refugee freedmen at this point entered the regiments organized by Major Stearns and Captain, afterwards General, Mussey, — a classmate of mine at Dartmouth, who, by the way, was the first officer of the regular army to volunteer for the service of enlisting Negroes.

Among those who came from the North to help in providing for the destitute, no one gave more freely of time, money, and personal services than Christopher H. Roberts. Recognizing the desperate need for some sort of educational facilities by which the mountain whites might profit permanently, he bought an immense building, surrounded, it was said, by a mile of veranda, which the Confederates had erected on the top of Lookout Mountain for a hospital, and turned it into a school. This he carried on at his own expense for the benefit of the white refugees, — male and female, — who attended from all over the neighboring country. The institution was in charge of C. P. F. Bancroft, later principal for many years of Phillips Academy, Andover. C. C. Carpenter, a well-known correspondent of the *Congregationalist*, was its business manager.

The school continued to do good work, and fitted many young men and women for useful careers all over the country. It was perhaps the earliest effort to found what was intended as a permanent school for the mountain whites, and as such deserves especial mention, although after Mr. Roberts's death the property was sold by his heirs and the proceeds turned over to Roberts College in Constantinople, which owes its existence to the same generous benefactor.

My errand accomplished at Chattanooga, I turned southward again in about a week's time, and stopping by the way at Cairo and Memphis, I was back in Vicksburg on the 4th of March, encouraged and invigorated as always by my intercourse with General Grant.

CHAPTER XI

Fuller statement of the work of the Freedmen's Department, based on reports of the General Superintendent and other officers of freedmen for 1864. Classification of the freed people.

AS the months passed, our efforts in behalf of the Negroes in the Valley assumed more satisfactory shape, although before the year was done we were to encounter as great difficulties as any that had yet confronted or discouraged us. In order to convey to the reader some definite and reliable notion of the magnitude of a task which is all but forgotten by the present generation, but which at the time represented an important phase in the National policy, and one closely associated with the principles of the Union cause, I can do no better than to quote somewhat freely from the report of the year 1864, prepared at the time by myself and my assistants and submitted officially to General Thomas. The report opens as follows:

OFFICE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT OF FREEDMEN,
DEPARTMENT OF THE TENNESSEE AND STATE OF ARKANSAS,
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, December 31, 1864.¹

BRIG.-GEN. L. THOMAS,
Adjutant-General, U. S. A.

GENERAL, — This supervision has extended, during the year, over a territory from Cairo southward, in the Missis-

¹ Owing to the impossibility of presenting the whole of the report, which comprises nearly one hundred printed pages, considerable liberty has neces-

issippi Valley, populated according to the census of 1860, by 770,000 blacks, and including the cities of Memphis, Vicksburg, Natchez, and Little Rock, and the military posts of Columbus, Island 10, Corinth, Helena, Du Vall's Bluff, Pine Bluff, Fort Smith, Goodrich Landing, Milliken's Bend, and Davis Bend.

The rebellion at the outset began to disturb this population. The frequent marching and counter-marching of loyal and disloyal armies, consuming or destroying the material comforts of life, such as food, shelter, and the implements of industry, the actual shock of arms, or the terror of their motion, left hardly an individual, white or black, unaffected. It was soon evident that the strength of these regions consisted in three distinct elements: masters, slaves, and the so-called poor whites. Of the last named, many were forced into the rebel armies. They were furnished with horses and better food and clothing, their families were supported, and they failed, therefore, to see so soon as some of the Negroes and the Southern Unionists, that the interests of the three distinct elements already noted were not only diverse, but hostile, and that the war was the natural effort of the master to render irrevocably supreme the power of his own caste. The Negroes very soon felt that their interests were identical with the objects of our armies. This identity of interest came

sarily been taken with the text, though never with the impression which the original report was intended to convey. Many verbal changes have been made, much detail has been omitted, the sequence of topics and sentences has been transposed, some material from other sources — chiefly reports of my officers — has been added, and the whole welded again into an uninterrupted narrative in which no attempt has been made to mark these changes. The original report is to be found in the Congressional Library: Miscellaneous Pamphlets 446.

slowly but surely to be perceived by our officers and soldiers and by the loyal public. The blacks gave information for the guidance of campaigns; they became laborers for the various staff departments; they took upon themselves all the serving of the army; they were finally accepted as capable of the soldier's discipline and endurance in all arms of the service, and worthy of a soldier's pay and honor. Out of those who came within our lines, probably not less than 80,000 either died in the United States service or (in 1864) were still in it as laborers or soldiers.

It is not unworthy of note here, that the army, although engaged in active warfare, though embracing in itself all the instrumentalities for the destruction of its foe, — at whatever cost of comfort, treasure, and life, — though having in it the usual admixture of good and bad, and although looked upon by many benevolent people as only another master for the blacks, accomplished practically all that could be done to free, feed, shelter, and protect the Negro and to give him medical attendance. It formed the only safe channel for the benevolence that came from other sources to his aid. More than all this, the army sought to evolve out of its forms for administering justice an adaptation of those forms, fitted to the peculiar condition of the freed people.

Such was the work in the hands of my officers and myself. To some extent our labor may have affected all of the above 770,000 during the year, but direct authority reached them only when they or their employers came within our lines.

To facilitate our operations, after the organization of the "Home Guards," the territory was divided into the District of West Tennessee, office at Memphis, Captain T. A. Walker, Superintendent; the District of Arkansas,

office at Little Rock, Major W. G. Sargent, Superintendent, with local offices at Helena, in charge of Captain A. L. Thayer; Pine Bluff, Captain Mallory; Du Vall's Bluff, Lieutenant W. Davis; Fort Smith; the District of Vicksburg, office at Vicksburg, Colonel Samuel Thomas, Superintendent and Provost-Marshal, assisted by Lieutenant-Colonel A. L. Mitchell at Natchez; Captain Norton, at Davis Bend; Lieutenant Thirds, at Vidalia; Lieutenant Mathews, at Goodrich Landing; and Captain Weber, at Vicksburg.

In addition to this territorial subdivision of labor among my assistants, the importance of three classes of interests, namely, the control of property, the supply of medicines and medical attendance, and the arrangement of educational affairs, rendered it necessary that I should have one officer whom I could hold responsible for each of these services. In respect to education this plan was defeated, during nine months, by circumstances beyond my control.¹

As to the management of property, both Governmental and private, the regulation of wages, and all general disciplinary measures, the following statements should be made: One of my officers, Lieutenant B. K. Johnson, was assigned to duty as Acting Assistant Quartermaster and Acting Commissary of Subsistence of Freedmen. He accomplished much for the economical management of property,—rendering satisfactory reports to Washington, as usually required of officers of those departments. All officers handling supplies received from the Government adjusted their methods of business, forms of reports, vouchers, etc., to army regulations, which required them to keep careful records

¹ For an account of educational affairs, see Chapter XIV.

of every transaction.¹ Not a cent of money was ever drawn from Government for the freedmen on any account.

For the support of the sick and those otherwise dependent, a tax was temporarily required (by Orders No. 63) on the wages of the able-bodied. It was thought at first that the Negroes would submit with reluctance to the collection of such a tax. But in this we were mistaken. Being a tax on wages, it compelled the employer and the employed to appear, one or both, before the officer charged with its collection, and this officer allowed no wages to go unpaid. The Negro soon saw in the measure his first recognition by Government, and although the recognition appeared in the form of a burden, he responded to it with alacrity, — finding in it the first assurance of any power protecting his right to make a bargain and hold the white man to its fulfilment. This comprehension of the affair argued a good sense of economic justice in a people entirely unused to such responsibilities. It was most interesting to watch the moral effect of taxing the ex-slaves. They freely acknowledged that they ought to assist in bearing the burden of the poor. They felt ennobled when they found that the Government was calling upon them as men to assist in the

¹ I remember in this connection, that after the war, while I was in Washington, a claim agent came to me endeavoring to collect for his client a rather large sum of money said to be due on account of wood cut on private property, receipted for by my officers, but for which payment had not been made. I directed the agent to apply to Captain T. A. Walker, Superintendent at Memphis, within whose district the transaction had taken place, telling the agent that I believed the duplicate papers would be found in Walker's possession. I was not mistaken. Captain Walker produced the papers promptly, and these showed that the wood had been paid for and receipts given by the present claimant for the money. I mention the fact to show that in spite of inadequate clerical assistance, our records were kept with all possible accuracy.

process by which their natural rights were to be secured. Thousands thus saw for the first time any money reward for their labor. The places where the tax was least rigidly collected were farthest behind in paying the colored man for his services. This tax, together with the funds accruing from the profits of labor in the Department, met all the incidental expenses of our widespread operations; paid \$5,000 for hospitals; the salaries of all hospital stewards and medical assistants (as per Orders No. 94), and enabled us to supply implements of industry to the people, — in addition to abandoned property. The same funds secured to the benefit of the Negroes, clothing, household utensils, and other articles essential to their comfort, to the amount of \$103,000. The Negroes could not themselves have secured these commodities for less than \$350,000.¹ The management of these funds and supplies was regulated by the exigencies of the people's condition, and was adapted as far as necessary to army methods, requiring a rigid system of accounts, monthly reports covered by cer-

¹ In order to supply these goods to the Negroes at reasonable prices and to prevent them from being cheated by outside traders, — not only in charging exorbitant prices, but also in measure and quality, and even in making change, — my brother, Frederick Eaton, was induced to undertake the task of providing for their wants. H. B. Claffin and Company agreed to furnish him the goods at cost price, and these were sold to the freedmen at less than ten per cent advance on New York prices, — a figure which barely covered risk and transportation charges. Freedmen's stores were thus established which, besides saving the freedman large sums of money, taught him valuable lessons in fair dealing and self-support. At the out-lying posts particularly, these stores were of the greatest value. At Pine Bluff, Arkansas, for instance, domestics of the same width and quality which sold in town at \$1.25 per yard could be obtained at the Freedmen's store for sixty cents. As a matter of fact, the goods were sold under this management at five per cent less than was provided in the plans devised by the officers of the Treasury Department.

tificates and vouchers, followed by careful inspections, not only from my office, but from the generals commanding.

According to Orders No. 9 issued by General L. Thomas, certain officers known as provost-marshals were selected from the men in the Freedmen's Department to discharge toward the Negroes scattered on plantations the duties of superintendents of freedmen. These officers were appointed by the commanding generals, and themselves appointed assistant provost-marshals, who patrolled the districts assigned to them, correcting abuses on plantations and acting as the representatives of the law as upheld by the military power. There was some difficulty in maintaining the incorruptibility of these officers, and the territory which had to be covered by each individual was too extended, but the system, nevertheless, worked extremely well.

In addition to the superintendents, department chiefs, and provost-marshals, a group of assistants assigned to special duties but known as general assistants was an efficient aid to our undertaking. Of these general assistants, H. B. Spelman, president of the Cleveland's Freedmen's Aid Commission, performed a particularly valuable service as agent for the sale of freedmen's crops. The trade regulations would not allow the freedmen to sell their cotton on the spot, and as they were without means of shipping it North they had to appoint attorneys to transact the business for them, and did not always succeed in getting honest men. Mr. Spelman, with the permission of the proper Treasury official, arranged that the small lots of cotton produced at various points within our lines by different owners should all be shipped under one set of permit papers taken out by Mr. Spelman himself, — thereby saving to the freedmen

the expense of the permit, which could only be secured on the payment of four dollars, no matter how small the amount to be shipped. He also procured through the Treasury Department the remission of the tax — four cents per pound — on the cotton cultivated by freedmen. The tax, if paid, would have reduced the profit of these Negro cultivators considerably over \$3000.¹ Through Mr. Spelman's agency eighty-one bales of cotton produced by freedmen on Home Farms, and one hundred and seventy-two bales produced by independent Negro cultivators, were sold for \$73,792. Mr. Spelman, by the way, was the father-in-law of John D. Rockefeller.

To meet the medical necessities of our work for the Negroes, Dr. D. O. McCord, Surgeon 63d U. S. C. I., was designated Surgeon-in-Chief of Freedmen. His powers by this assignment proved inadequate, and he was made Medical Director of Freedmen for the Department of Tennessee and State of Arkansas, with power to employ surgeons and control medicines (December 1, 1863). Dr. McCord immediately began a tour of inspection, and set himself to improve the conditions wherever these were unsatisfactory. The sanitary commissions were appealed to for help in meeting the immediate needs of the sick-camps and hospitals. The Western Sanitary Commission supplied antiscorbutic articles of diet through its depot in Vicksburg; the North Western Freedmen Aid Commission also sent vegetables. The latter organization sent us ten physicians, who, however, received their pay from the Govern-

¹ W. P. Mellen, Special Agent of the Treasury Department, to whom Mr. Spelman first applied for the remission of this tax, refused to grant the request, and recourse was had to a direct appeal to the Secretary of the Treasury.

ment. Dr. McCord next undertook to procure better hospital buildings, and with this end in view he made a trip to the Northern States, interviewing the various aid commissions and appealing to Northern benevolence. At his suggestion I had placed \$5000 of the Freedmen Fund at his disposal for this purpose, and it was hoped a like amount could be raised. Apart from \$1000 given by the National Freedmen Aid Society, and a donation of some \$400 from a member of the firm which contracted to furnish the buildings, the eight hospitals ordered by Dr. McCord were paid for by the funds dispensed by the Freedmen's Department. I mention this fact because the reports of the said commissions give the impression — unintentionally no doubt — that nothing was done for the sanitary condition of the Negroes by our Department. The above facts are quoted from Dr. McCord's report dated June 28, 1864. In conclusion he says: "On the first day of December there were eight surgeons employed with these people in the Department of the Tennessee and State of Arkansas. Most of them were incompetent, and were relieved from duty for that reason. Now we have thirty-two, all educated men, who take an interest in the work. Then we had but one hospital worthy of the name; now we have one in every camp, or within reach of it. Wherever the Government has colored laborers, we send surgeons, hospital and medical stores."

This favorable advance in the medical affairs of the freed people was hardly secured before the Surgeon-General found the medical appropriations of Congress falling short of the necessities of the army in its active operations. The Secretary of War accordingly ordered — "No issue will be

made, or bills paid, by the Medical Department, on account of Freedmen not in the United States service." Fortunately, having hospitals and moderate supplies under our own control, my officers, aided by the purchase of medicines by the Freedmen Fund, and the assistance of the aid societies, were able to limit the extent of this disaster. Arrangements were later made with the Surgeon-General and the Secretary of the Treasury to secure the freedmen against such emergencies.

These facts, quoted with all but verbal accuracy from my report of 1864 and reports of my officers, show briefly and somewhat inadequately the vehicle of organization by which we accomplished our work. The following paragraphs, extracted chiefly from the former source, should give with more fulness and accuracy than I have hitherto stated them the conditions with which we had to deal:

A rough classification of the freed people will serve to clarify the reader's appreciation of the various groups in whose interests we labored:

First, all new arrivals; with whom were grouped those employed as laborers in military service, as hospital attendants, officers' servants, employees in the commissary and quartermaster's departments, etc.¹

Second, those resident in cities. Freedmen supplied by far the larger share of industrial pursuits with laborers: They worked as barbers, hackmen, draymen, porters, carpenters, shoemakers, blacksmiths, tailors, seamstresses, nurses, laundresses, waiters in hotels and private families,

¹ New arrivals were usually given their first opportunity to work in connection with regimental service.

cooks, etc. Not a few of this second class were well-to-do; many conducted enterprises of their own, either mechanical or commercial. Some were teachers. Properly connected, too, with those resident in cities, were the employees and waiters on steamboats, and stevedores.

A third and large class found employment as wood-choppers, on islands and at points of security along the river, rendering a service absolutely essential to our commercial and military operations.

Fourth, those who labored on plantations. These were subdivided as follows: First, those who were employed by the owners of the lands, or the whites or blacks who leased of the Government; Second, those who were independent planters or gardeners, — either cultivating on shares, or leasing of the owners or of the Government.

Fifth, the sick and those otherwise incapacitated who were distributed among the hospitals or on the "Home Farms" where they contributed what labor they could toward their own support. With these should be classed the hundreds of orphaned or abandoned children for whom, with the help of private benevolence, orphanages were established as soon as practicable.

Writing at length, on July 5, 1864, to Mr. Levi Coffin,¹ who was then on a mission to England, which resulted in the formation of the London Freedmen's Aid Society, and who desired me to report to him any data which he could use in his work there, I was able to make the following state-

¹ This good Quaker, Levi Coffin, one of the stanchest friends the Negro had, was especially interested in our work in the Valley. He was president of one of the aid associations, and states in his "Reminiscences" — p. 671 — that he had sheltered under his own roof over 3000 fugitive slaves, — for the most part before the war began.

ments concerning the 113,650 freedmen whom my officers had cared for during the past year :

“These freedmen are now disposed of as follows: In military service as soldiers, laundresses, cooks, officers’ servants, and laborers in the various staff departments, 41,150; in cities, on plantations, and in freedmen’s villages and cared for, 72,500. Of these, 62,300 are entirely self-supporting,—the same as any industrial class anywhere else,—as planters, mechanics, barbers, hackmen, draymen, etc., conducting enterprises on their own responsibility or working as hired laborers. The remaining 10,200 receive subsistence from the Government. 3000 of them are members of families whose heads are carrying on plantations, and have under cultivation 4000 acres of cotton; they are to pay the Government for their subsistence from the first income of the crop. The other 7200 include the paupers,—that is to say, all Negroes over and under the self-supporting age, the crippled, and sick in hospital,—of the 113,650 and those engaged in their care. Instead of being unproductive this class has now under cultivation 500 acres of corn, 790 acres of vegetables, and 1500 acres of cotton,—besides working at wood-chopping and other industries. There are reported in the aggregate over 100,000 acres of cotton under cultivation. Of these, about 7000 acres are leased and cultivated by blacks. Some Negroes are managing as high as 300 or 400 acres.”

To resume the summary of my report :

All of these various classes and individuals on first coming into our lines needed direction or protection; and most of them needed shelter and immediate supplies of

food and clothing. Often they came on mules or horses, or in carts with more or less of their "truck." Generally, on reaching our lines, the picket officers relieved them of all stock, and in this way the Government was supplied with many thousand mules and horses. My officers were instructed to secure to the Negroes the advantage of their stock, unless pressingly demanded for military purposes. Colonel Samuel Thomas reported the property saved to those arriving in a single instance, sold and turned over in cash to the respective owners, as amounting to \$2408. Sometimes great multitudes of Negroes would arrive together. The Colonel reported 5000 in his district (Vicksburg) from General Sherman's raid further into Mississippi and Alabama, and 2500 from the Red River expedition. Few can appreciate the labors that devolved upon my officers by these arrivals. Speculation, vice, and crime swarmed around old and young alike, stealing their little gold and silver, or decoying them away to abuse their ignorance or to obtain their services for nothing. Only a military guard and the army facilities for furnishing supplies were at all adequate to cope with the difficulties. The new arrivals, together with those in military service, constituted a large proportion of the people. Having frequently observed the readiness with which the able-bodied enlisted before their minds had been corrupted or made restless by life in private service, or in cities, or among the regimental camps, my officers promptly directed the Negro's attention to the duty of enlisting, and thus contributed more or less to the organization of all the numerous regiments within the limits of this supervision as well as to the supply of fatigue labor.

In regard to the second class, those who worked in cities, our labors were complicated by unavoidable entanglements with unsympathetic municipal authorities. Some cities, notwithstanding the acknowledged disloyalty of a decided majority, were allowed to keep up the form of electing municipal officers, who did no more to conform to the spirit of the Government than was enforced by military discipline. This was especially true in all dealings with the Negro. Citizens would pay those Negroes freed under the old State laws; but the man freed by Congress, or by the Proclamation, or the exigencies of war, was in their eye no more than an escaped "chattel." Return him to his master they could not, but long after the occupation by our armies, municipal justice was dealt out to him by personal abuse, — in the application of the lash at the old whipping posts, or in doubling for him the fines imposed upon whites for the same offences. At first every attempt of my officers to protect the interests of the freedmen, either in the payment of proper wages, or a fair administration of justice, or considerate personal treatment, was met on the part of the civil authorities by the not unnatural force and violence of old prejudices, and by the desire to profit from the fees attaching to municipal offices; while the complaint was often made on the part of the provost-marshals or military commanders of our army that the officer of freedmen was meddling in that which was none of his business. Meantime the law, to the Negro, took any form of caprice. Any officer who wanted the services of colored men sent out his guard and pressed them, and the superintendent was allowed to carry out his purposes without hindrance either from officials or citizens

only with respect to Negroes who were sick or outcasts, out of whom nothing could be made in the way of services or money. Finally, however, all the affairs of the freedmen came more definitely under the control of the superintendents of freedmen, and little by little we aided the Negro to escape and rise above the general wreck of old slavocratic municipal statutes, ordinances, and customs social and civil. One of the simplest and most efficient means of bringing the city population into its proper relation with the Government was the pass system. The blacks were assured of their freedom before the law the same as whites. But all whites within military lines must have passes: so must the blacks. The Superintendent of Freedmen knew the Negroes best, and could best determine to whom to issue passes, permits, etc.; hence all permits to remain in town or to pass the lines of the army must receive his signature. As fast as the individual Negro's trustworthiness became established by experience, his privileges were extended until he was on an equal footing with the white man. The extent to which the pass system was a check upon contraband trade and information, and practices subversive of social order and military discipline, daily became more manifest. By thus bringing under view the whole city population, the superintendents aided materially in overcoming idleness and vagrancy, and the vices and petty crimes connected therewith.

Of the third class, — those employed in wood-yards, — it may be said that while it was subject to constant variations in numbers, it was always one of the largest with which we had to deal. The work of the wood-choppers was essential to the keeping open of the Mississippi River,

but one of the greatest drawbacks we experienced was in finding the right kind of men to run the yards, — men who were capable of carrying on the business, and who yet were humane and kind, as well as industrious and energetic. Our experiments were various and often discouraging. Few men could stand up to the labor required of them. They would have under their charge a camp of one thousand or more people, and have to attend to the distribution of the rations, to the work done, and to the general improvement of the camp. It was not strange that men broke down under the responsibility and refused to perform the task. In illustration of the importance of the wood-cutting enterprise, I quote, with omissions and verbal changes, from Colonel Thomas's report of his district (Vicksburg):

“The first start made with furnishing the people in Freedmen's Camps with labor was in the way of wood-cutting. The wood was necessary in supplying fuel to steamers engaged in the transportation of the material of war for the use of our armies. The difficulties surrounding this enterprise were great, but by diligent exertions yards were started at Young's Point, Paw Paw Island, Omega Landing, and Island 102. Many private parties also started wood-yards at other places in a small way. The wood-yards under this supervision seemed to point out the way in which money could be made, and a grand rush followed on the part of all who could gather together the material necessary for such an enterprise.¹

¹ The necessity for supplying wood compelled us to encourage wood-yards where, for the lack of sufficient force at our control, we were unable fully to protect the rights of the people. In addition to yards conducted by our officers, many wood-cutting enterprises were established by irresponsible persons at places which favored the landing of boats at unauthorized points, and the communication of contraband information and supplies to the enemy. This state of affairs resulted chiefly from the division of authority caused by the appearance of civil officers — agents of the Treasury — in a territory under military rule.

“In September, 1864, [at which time the wood-yards — by an error in the interpretation of an order for which the Freedmen’s Department was not responsible — were turned over to a different and less successful supervision] there had been cut in this District, and delivered to steamboats, over 60,000 cords of wood, bringing to the freedmen over \$125,000, and saving to the Government an expense of about \$90,000 more by selling at \$1.50 per cord less than the Government could have got the wood from private parties. This wood was cut at very little expense to the quartermaster’s department. Teams, wagons, and gearing brought in by the Negroes from their plantation homes were put into the yards by their owners, who felt willing to have them used for the convenience of the wood-yards, while these were for their own support. All the teams were taken up on the papers of the quartermaster of freedmen, so that forage could be drawn for their support, and the property in like manner secured to the people from seizure. The people themselves were contented with this arrangement, and were encouraged by the good faith of the officers in charge. It should be added here that several thousand cords of wood were taken by the Government, and no vouchers given by the authorities taking it, — being a clean gift from the Negroes to the Government.

“At the different Government wood-yards in this District it is safe to say that over one thousand people have been employed; in private enterprises of like nature, fully five hundred more; making a working force of 1500, and a dependency of at least as many more, so that the aggregate is 3000. The wood-yards under my care were located in the vicinity of our camps, in places where it was safe for the working people and their friends, and also safe for steamers, to land. The superintendents in charge exerted themselves to the utmost to have all the people in the camps perform some kind of labor, — the men chopping, hauling, etc., the women loading, unloading, and cording the wood on its arrival in the yard. Efforts were made to combine all sorts of labor whether profitable or not, as the Government was responsible for the support of the people, and they should, in return, do as much as they could. The wood was sold to Government and to private parties, the people paid, and the balance turned over to the Freedmen Fund

and used by our officers for the purchase of clothing and other articles furnished to them which the Government did not supply. With the produce of lands which the camps were working, and with the increase of their means otherwise, the people were drawing fewer rations every month, and there was good reason for hoping that they would soon be independent and self-supporting. Rations were issued to all alike, and there was no attempt made to force the chopper to pay for what he received, as he was helping to support and care for the dependent portion of the camp, and should himself be fed on that account.

“These wood-yards, situated on richly wooded and fertile islands, were, in my view, among the most hopeful and encouraging industries in my district; the enterprise found a ready market for all its produce; it afforded not only a support to the people at the yards, but an opening for thousands more who infested our military posts or languished on distant plantations; and it gradually educated the people and helped to make them independent and self-reliant.”

As already indicated, the laborers on plantations were practically a class by themselves, and to the consideration of their affairs I shall devote the following chapter.

Of the fifth group it should be said that all Negroes pronounced by the medical examiners as incapable of full service in either military or industrial pursuits were sent to the Home Farms, together with the new arrivals who had not yet secured employment. Colonel L. B. Eaton, 69th U. S. C. I., and special inspector of freedmen for the State of Arkansas, reports upon the Home Farms of that State as follows:

“At the Home Farms are gathered those out of employment, new comers, and vagrants, and those rendered helpless through age or misfortune. These are rationed by the Government, and are supposed by many to be a burden and an expense. But notwithstanding all these Homes were put in operation this year

(1864), with all implements, draught animals, and seeds to be obtained, and notwithstanding the nearly total failure of the cotton crop which was their chief reliance, those in Arkansas have earned sufficient to pay the Government for its outlays, and fair wages to the hands. [Of the 11,363 Freedmen reported in the working season, only 985 were drawing rations, and even these were doing work more than sufficient for their own support. Had not the ravages of the army worm taken place, a very large profit would have been derived from their labor.] The benefits of this system are to be measured, however, not by the success of these farms alone, but by the products of all freedmen labor which accrues directly or indirectly to our advantage, heightened by the amount lost to the enemy. It may not be improper to suggest to those who declaim against the Government being burdened with Negro paupers, that while, in this State, the number of colored people within our lines is fully equal to that of the whites, twice as many of the latter draw rations without making any return whatever. Many of these whites are glad to live and work in partnership with the more thrifty of the Negroes."

CHAPTER XII

Statement continued. The plantation interests and the lessee system. Treasury control and resulting complications. The Negro's condition when employed by white lessees. The Negro as an independent cultivator.

PASSING for the present from the text of my report, it will be necessary to refer to certain questions of National policy before the reader can in any true sense realize the condition of that class of freedmen we are now considering, namely the laborers on plantations.

It will be remembered by all who have had occasion to look into the matter, that the power of the Treasury over trade and economic conditions generally, was gradually augmented by successive acts of Congress until that Department was at one time in practical control of many important functions of government in those States which were nominally under martial law. In accordance with the acts of Congress dated July 13, 1861 and May 20, 1862, the Secretary of the Treasury issued a set of regulations for the guidance of his aids in their new duties. These regulations applied solely to "commercial property," and incidentally to persons handling such property, and to vehicles used in its transportation. It was unquestionably right that the Treasury Department should control in a measure

at least all trade relations, and although some difficulty was experienced from the first, upon the whole no severe complications appeared to result. There had been undoubtedly much mishandling of property by army officers, who were tempted to make the misfortunes of the Confederates and the opportunities for engaging in contraband trade contribute directly to their own aggrandizement. Such corruption, of course, was most extensive and most notorious in connection with the cotton industry. In order to check these abuses, and to have constantly upon the spot officers authorized to control trade and care for property forsaken by its rightful owners, Congress, on March 12, 1863, passed an act to provide for the collection of abandoned property and for the prevention of frauds in insurrectionary districts. Under this act, agents of the Treasury were designated to receive and collect all abandoned or captured property in any section of the country in insurrection against the United States, except such property — arms, ordinance, etc., etc. — as should fall directly under the control of the military forces. Both the War and the Navy departments pledged themselves to support the Treasury officials in fulfilling the regulations issued by the Treasury Department and based on this act of Congress.

A circular was issued by the Treasury on September 11, 1863, regulating the conduct of affairs by the officials of that Department. In addition to the legislative action, noted above, the Secretary of War issued, on October 9, General Orders No. 331, by the terms of which all houses, tenements, lands, and plantations, abandoned or deserted by the insurgents within our lines — save such as

might be required for military purposes—were to be turned over to the supervision and control of the supervising agents of the Treasury Department, and all officers of the United States army were enjoined to render to the agents appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury all such aid as might be necessary to enable them to obtain possession of such property and to maintain their authority over the same. These acts of Congress and Department orders involving the control of property, and especially of lands and tenements, brought the agents of the Treasury into direct relations with the officers of the Freedmen's Department. It was perhaps unavoidable that complications should arise.

In the meanwhile another element had come into prominence. The suffering and destitution of the Negroes had been in part alleviated by the many aid societies, to whose helpfulness I have already referred and whose work can never be overestimated or adequately acknowledged. One of the most efficient of these was the Western Sanitary Commission.¹ This society had been particularly active and helpful at Helena in the winter of 1862-3, where better hospital facilities had been established under its patronage, and in October of the latter year its efforts were directed to other points along the Mississippi River. James E. Yeatman, president of the Commission, made a personal tour of inspection of most of the cities and camps under my jurisdiction, and embodied his observations in a report to his society dated December 17, 1863.¹

¹ See "Report on the Condition of the Freedmen of the Mississippi," presented to the Western Sanitary Commission, Dec. 17, 1863, by James E. Yeatman. In the course of his report, under a paragraph headed "Vicksburg and Vicinity," Mr. Yeatman remarks: "I called to see Chap-

This report was in the main a very frank statement of the sufferings and abuses among the freedmen. None was more conscious of these conditions, and none more eager to alleviate them, than were my officers and myself. This fact I believe Mr. Yeatman appreciated, but his reflections upon the conduct of affairs were nevertheless severe.

Abuses connected with the leasing system and the general provisions for the employment of the Negroes were the most difficult and important of the questions confronting us, and on the strength of Yeatman's report and the representations made to the Government by the Western Sanitary Commission, Mr. Yeatman was invited to co-operate with the Supervising Special Agent of the Treasury Department, Mr. William P. Mellen, in the formation of the new regulations under which the Treasury purposed to assume control of the plantation interests. These regulations were devised with a view to obviating the worst of the abuses under which we were suffering, and many of the provisions were extremely well considered.

For instance, in order to check if possible the employment of overseers, who were responsible for many of the freedmen's difficulties, no lessee was to be permitted to lease more than one plantation, — two planters had previously been in possession of four plantations each,

lain, now Colonel, Eaton, and found him hard at work. He devotes his every thought and all his energies to the great work which has devolved upon him. I took as much of his time as I felt it right to ask. I should have liked one entire day without interruption, but an hour was the most that could be reasonably requested or spared, in which he gave me only the outlines of his general plan of operations. I found that his views corresponded with my own, and with a plan which I had formed in my own mind for aiding and benefiting the freedmen, and securing to them the rewards of their labor and the enjoyment of their rights."

another of five, — and preference was given to those wishing small tracts of land. This was a very wise provision which would have tended to increase the number of small homesteads owned by whites and blacks, — a phase of social evolution which the Freedmen's Department always tried to foster. Unfortunately the money-making fever which afflicted the lessees led them to take on large properties, which in the disturbed conditions of the country it was often impossible to operate. A new minimum rate of wages was introduced, — for men of the first grade twenty-five dollars per month; of the second grade, twenty dollars per month. For women of the first and second grades, eighteen and fourteen dollars respectively. Persons between twelve and fourteen and over fifty years of age were to constitute a third grade, of which the men and boys were to receive fifteen dollars a month, and the women and girls ten. The wages were to constitute a first lien upon the crops. A definite contract was to be entered into between the lessee and the employee, for the fulfilment of which the superintendents of the Home Farms were practically made responsible. All laborers were obtained through them, and complaints settled by their intervention. The lessee was to provide good and sufficient quarters and one acre of ground to each family of four or more persons, and to smaller families, or to individuals, less in proportion. He was to have on hand suitable clothing and good food to be sold at cost to the laborers at fifteen per cent advance on wholesale prices.

A special effort was made to secure to the Negro the full amount of wages due him, except in cases of sickness or neglect to work. The freedmen had been wofully

discouraged by the facility with which the planter contrived to evade paying them full wages in cases where he had himself failed to furnish them a full month's work. Cases were reported by Mr. Yeatman in which the laborer — through no fault of his own — received, for instance, but two dollars and seventy cents for his month's labor. Lessees, however, were only required to pay half the monthly wages, either in money, provisions, or clothing, until the crops should be sold. On all plantations, whether owned or leased, where freedmen were employed a tax of one cent per pound on cotton, and a proportional amount on all other products, was to be collected as a contribution in support of the helpless among the freed people. A similar tax — varying with the value of the property — was levied by the Government upon all leased plantations in lieu of rent.

Theoretically the Yeatman-Mellen plan was better than the system previously inaugurated by Adjutant-General Thomas, but in practice it must be confessed the new system was subject to quite as many complications.

In the first place, the question of giving the plantations protection from physical violence was full of difficulty, and this in turn reacted on the industrial conditions. While the use of the land was under military control, little attempt had been made to cultivate in sections where a reasonable defence against guerillas could not be secured. The lessees, however, under the far more extensive system of agricultural operations encouraged by the Treasury, forsook all prudence in their eagerness to acquire wealth, and rented lands in districts where extreme exposure was inevitable. As a result of this, impossible demands were

made upon the military forces, whose operations the planters came to feel should be especially directed to forwarding the personal interests of the individual planter. Mr. Mellen himself foresaw this difficulty and the threatened downfall of his whole system, and in his report to Secretary Chase, dated February 11, 1864,—about one month after the promulgation of the new orders,—urgently demanded that “adequate military protection to this planting interest . . . be afforded *at once*, or the hundreds of persons now there [*i. e.*, on plantations] and of others going there will abandon their contemplated work.” But such protection as Mr. Mellen received did not suffice.

The introduction into the Valley of a distinct class whose interests were primarily commercial and involved patriotism or humanity only as secondary and incidental considerations, had already complicated matters in the limited plantation activities with which we had been experimenting. That class was now alarmingly increased. The high price at which cotton was selling tempted many Northerners into the enterprise. Besides the out and out speculators there was a large number of men whose energies were not directly absorbed by the war, but who, feeling its disturbing influence, and drawn thereby away from their ordinary occupations, were ready for any venture that might improve their fortunes. These men availed themselves recklessly of the opportunity thus offered them. They came on the ground to make money, whether the Union cause—not to mention the Negro—suffered by their operations or not. Money and information, together with vast quantities of contraband articles, went into the Confederate lines; and incidentally the cotton within the

Confederate lines came out. The army was powerless to assert its authority over affairs controlled by the Treasury; the Treasury had no vehicle at its command whereby to enforce its own authority in a district where martial law was the only law, and the result was that in too many cases no authority was exercised at all. No sweeping accusation of the Treasury Department or of the planters is to be inferred from this. The Treasury Department was trying to insure the benefits of trade to a territory barely delivered of the curse of war; but the small army of agents which it sent out failed, on the whole, even more lamentably than individuals in the military service, to withstand the peculiar temptations which the situation offered. As for the planters, with all their cupidity and selfishness, they were—like every one else in those days—largely in the grip of circumstances that proved too much for them, and moreover there were among them, as among the officers of the Treasury, men of high standards who remained incorruptible throughout. Indeed, so numerous were the planters whose records were creditable, that Colonel Thomas was able at one time to report that he believed the lessees in the neighborhood of Vicksburg—his district—would compare favorably with any body of business men.

The correspondence between various officers of our army sufficiently indicates the increased difficulty of controlling the general military situation after the rule of the Treasury Department had been inaugurated.¹ It is the

¹ See letters from Admiral Daniel Porter to Gen. W. T. Sherman, Oct. 29, 1863; from Gen. Grant to Sec. Chase, July 21, 1863; from Gen. S. A. Hurlburt to Lieut.-Col. C. T. Christensen, March 1, 1865, etc., etc. War of the Rebellion, Official Records.

relation of the Treasury to freedmen's affairs, however, which concerns us now.

Major-General N. P. Banks, Department of the Gulf, whose work among the freedmen was of great value, expressed the situation with especial force and clearness in a letter addressed to Washington from New Orleans as early as October 15, 1863, at which time the Treasury officials were acting under the circular issued September 11, and before Mr. Mellen's plans had been cast into the definite regulations noticed above. I quote a portion of General Banks's letter :

MAJOR-GENERAL H. W. HALLECK,
General-in-Chief, U. S. Army,
 Washington, D. C.,

General, — Thus far in my administration I have not troubled the Government about the negroes. When I arrived at New Orleans, I found many thousand negroes in idleness. I set them all to work, for wages, wherever they pleased to go. What with the system of compensated labor by the Government and by individuals universally adopted, and the enlistment as soldiers, they were all employed, and all supported by their labor. . . . The condition is now changed. I have, in obedience to orders from Government, turned over to agents of the Treasury Department all plantations and plantation property. . . . Those who have leased them [the plantations] prefer, in working them, the able-bodied men and women to the disabled and infirm. They are daily sifting them out ; placing the helpless on plantations, as I am informed, that are and have been uncultivated. I am officially notified that they are there. It is expected that the military authorities are to support them. . . . The Government finds itself in this position : the lessees of Government, and the enemy, turned over to us all their helpless men, women, and children. We turn over very gladly all plantation property to the agents of the Treasury Department. Does the support of the infirm and poor negroes go with the prop-

erty to which they naturally belong ; or is it charged upon the army as military expenses and fastened upon the War Department and paid out of the war estimate and appropriations? If the latter, I desire an order to that effect, and means defraying the cost. It is a pressing and important matter here, and increasing in magnitude daily. I beg instructions as to my course. The process pursued will bring us tens of thousands before the winter is over. . . . The coming winter will, I fear, be one of terrible suffering here. The people are becoming poorer every hour. . . . Hitherto the expenses have been paid out of rents, contributions levied upon rebel property, etc. This property is now turned over to the Treasury officials. I do not complain of this. The administration of their charities, and providing for the increase, have been a labor of far greater intensity than the creation of an army and the conduct of campaigns. My inquiry is, ought not these charities to go with the only property out of which they can be properly paid?

A further comment might be made in addition to the facts so well presented in this letter. The Treasury Department was about to concern itself primarily with the control of abandoned lands. It will be seen by a reference to the classification of laborers noted in the preceding chapter that a comparatively small number of even self-supporting freedmen had any real connection with the abandoned properties. Yet many who in those days claimed to be the special friends of the Negro looked upon him as a mere appendage to the land, and in urging that the plantation agents should be charged with the care of the freedmen these would-be benefactors placed unconsidered thousands in danger of oppression and in actual and present want.

In this emergency, Adjutant-General Thomas addressed the War Department as follows :

CHATTANOOGA, TENN.,

HON. EDWIN M. STANTON,

February 20, 1864.

Secretary of War :

Colonel Eaton, Ninth Louisiana Colored Regiment, superintendent of freedmen on the Mississippi, has deemed it expedient to join me in East Tennessee, to report the condition of affairs in that section of the country. Since Mr. Mellen has taken charge of the abandoned plantations, instead of reorganizing what had already been done under my instructions for the present year, he required all permits to be revoked, and introduced a system the workings of which the men on the river assert to be impracticable. The consequence is that a large number of persons who had selected plantations have become dissatisfied and are rapidly leaving the country, returning the freedmen on our hands for support. May not too great and impracticable changes break the good faith of the Government and create a most injurious distrust? The system adopted by Colonel Eaton has now the result of experience and works well. My system of taking the abandoned plantations for the purpose of giving employment to the blacks, under all the disadvantages, which have been many, has also worked well. Under these plans, with such modifications as experience has taught us, the Treasury agents and the military authorities would have worked in harmony. Then the blacks had been made self-supporting. Now as the season is rapidly advancing and the plantations are being given up by the lessees, I fear we shall have many thousand blacks to feed and clothe. It is said Mr. Mellen has gone to Washington to ask for a large appropriation of money, for which I can see no necessity, as under my system many thousand dollars have been placed in the Treasury with little expense to the Government.

I shall immediately proceed down the river. . . . I do not wish to have anything to do with the abandoned plantations, but if the Government will send a commission, or appoint Mr. Field to take charge, I will operate with them cordially and furnish all the labor required. I consider the negroes under my control — furnishing of course labor under the calls of the Treasury agents; but Mr. Mellen assumes that they are entirely under him, and he desires

to issue orders accordingly. The military authorities must have command of the negroes or there will be endless confusion. I will keep this control unless ordered to the contrary.

L. THOMAS,
Brigadier and Adjutant General.

And again:

LOUISVILLE, KY., February 27, 1864.

HON. EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War:

I arrived here this morning. . . . I will await your instructions here. It is very important that I should proceed down the Mississippi as soon as possible. I hope still to be able to provide for the vast amount of work to be returned on our hands. If the Treasury agent should insist upon carrying out his regulations for leasing abandoned plantations and furnishing hands, none of the blacks can be provided for. If, however, the scale of wages and the regulations adopted by Superintendent Eaton, approved by Major-General Grant and myself, be adopted, and the control be continued by the military authorities, there is yet time to lease plantations by the Treasury agent and provide for a vast amount of labor. May I request an early reply?

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

L. THOMAS,
Adjutant-General, U. S. Army.

The day after this communication was sent, Thomas received a despatch from President Lincoln requesting him to "take hold and be master in the contraband and leasing business."

A series of interviews with Mr. Mellen followed, and as a result of these, Orders No. 9 were issued at Vicksburg on March 11, 1864. The orders were little more than a duplicate of the rules adopted by General Banks, and the regulations of Mr. Mellen remained unchanged save for those dealing with the classification and employment of

laborers, and with police matters. The minimum wage for able-bodied men over fourteen years of age was reduced to ten dollars per month, and for women of the same class, seven dollars. To children, invalids, and the aged, half rates were to be paid. No commutation of supplies was to be allowed except in clothing, which might be commuted at the rate of three dollars per month. This provision was afterwards abolished, though not all planters took advantage of the change, but while in force it practically fixed the minimum rate of wages at thirteen and ten dollars per month.

Formal classifications of laborers based on age and strength alone were far more equitable on paper than in actual application. Such being the case, the scale of wages enforced in the Yeatman-Mellen regulations as a *minimum rate* was higher than the industrial situation could sustain. The rate might have applied admirably if the operations had been confined to unexposed territory, for profits were high, and the successful planter was fully able to compensate his workmen on the basis of the Yeatman-Mellen scale. Unfortunately not all planters by any means were successful planters; moreover, the industrial conditions were in constant upheaval, owing to the loss of lives, the suffering, and financial losses entailed by the attacks of the Confederate raiders. No system, therefore, which involved great risks could hope to prosper. General Thomas's revised police regulations and the prospect of a better understanding between civil and military authorities promised some improvement over the plan proposed by Mr. Mellen. The vital element of danger, however, in that plan was the extensiveness of the agricultural operations

which it encouraged, and of that danger the revision which the plan received from General Thomas had not freed it. The Freedmen's Department still faced grave responsibilities, which were augmented by the constantly increasing number of laborers who were driven from the raided plantations, and returned on our hands for protection and support at a time when our organization had been rendered comparatively ineffective by the dangers and difficulties of a divided authority. The plan which I had personally aimed to put into operation and which involved no rigid classification of laborers is thus outlined in the text of my official report:

I proposed, first, that commanders should indicate the limits within which security could be assured. Second, that within these limits all Negroes able to conduct independent enterprises, as lessees, should take out leases for small farms from the Treasury Department. Third, that those capable of carrying on such enterprises, but without means to prosecute them, should receive the needed assistance from benevolent individuals or societies; or else subsistence and other incidental aid from Government, — the amount to be deducted from the first income of the crop. Fourth, that houses, sufficient land, etc., should be reserved for shelter and for the industries of all those necessarily dependent. I had invited benevolent societies to come forward and furnish funds, agents, and other necessities, thus providing for as many refugees as possible. I proposed that those remaining should be similarly provided for by Government. Fifth, that loyal owners, if there were any such, still in possession of their lands, or those parties leasing of the Treasury abandoned lands, — *within these*

limits of security — should hire freedmen, a minimum rate being fixed below which none should go, to guard against fraud upon the more ignorant, and above which prices might rise *ad libitum* for all services of special value, as prompted by competition, — each engagement to be a *bona fide* voluntary agreement between the parties, witnessed by the proper superintendent, and the inviolability of which should be strictly enforced by Government.

Such was in fact the policy toward which all the independent efforts of the Freedmen's Department had tended from the first.

With this brief outline of a complicated episode, the story of which has never, to my knowledge, been plainly told, the reader is better prepared to understand the statements of my officers in regard to the condition of the freedmen on plantations. I therefore quote again with more consecutiveness from my report of 1864.

So many questions of serious military bearing confronted our commanders; so many questions of profit and speculation concerned the capitalists; and such important issues, involving life and civilizing influences, were to be faced by the freedmen, and by the philanthropists and statesmen, that I took the utmost pains to bring forward in my report all statistical and trustworthy information possible. Answers to carefully prepared questions were received from six distinct classes of persons; from the planters, the freedmen, the superintendents and provost-marshals, the agents of benevolent societies, and from commanding officers. These contemporary judgments, which may be found in the report, make up an interesting body of opinion well worth noting.

There was a large number of plantations where it was known to be especially hazardous for my assistants to go; moreover, to take the testimony of the Negroes in any form available for use was a task of peculiar difficulty. The Rev. A. S. Fiske, a man of known courage, unyielding integrity, and large experience among the freed people, was selected to investigate the condition of freedmen on plantations. Being familiar with all the discriminations necessary to be made in noting the evidence, he successfully accomplished a difficult task. The following excerpts are taken, with slight verbal change and the necessary omission of much interesting matter, from Chaplain Fiske's report, incorporated in the general report from which I have already quoted:

"This inspection has covered ninety-five places leased by whites, and fifty-six plats of land worked by the blacks for themselves, in the districts of Natchez, Vicksburg, and Helena. In these districts I have left but few places without examination. . . . The ninety-five plantations examined embrace 45,745 acres of land, said to be cultivated. They have produced about 4800 bales of cotton and perhaps 18,000 bushels of corn. They have given labor and support to 8588 people—about ninety people to a plantation. About twenty plantations I did not see. From some of them I hear good reports. Supposing them to average with those examined, we shall have (in the districts above noted):

Total number of acres on which crops are made,	54,105
“ “ “ bales cotton	5,910
“ “ “ people supported	10,388

"These one hundred and fifteen plantations, together with fifty-six plats of land cultivated by blacks, are what I find remaining of the four hundred and fifty leases, more or less, which have been taken for the year. From the ninety-five safest of these plantations, on which cultivation has been carried on during the season,

there have been taken by the rebels, 2314 head of serviceable stock, and 966 blacks. The blacks have been taken back into the interior of the States and resold into bondage.¹ The mules have gone directly to the rebel service. Beside this plunder, the Confederates have carried off with them, how much of supplies, both in dry-goods and in food, it is impossible to do more than conjecture. Nor have I any means of ascertaining the amount of stock or the number of hands taken from that greatly larger outlying region, where all the planters have been utterly broken up. Nor is it my sphere to recite the horrible details of atrocious murders perpetrated upon both black and white. Nor is it possible to know what sums of money or what amount of goods have sufficed to keep the marauders from certain thoroughly exposed but marvellously secure places. It is a matter of common report that not a few planters have taken measures of one sort or another to get the good will of those who else could have ruined them. Some have stated the fact to me plainly, and of others it has been freely said by their neighbors. The planters have not as a general thing made their expenses; and the whole system of plantations is broken up by late military movements, except in the districts of Helena and Natchez, and the people are, before this, gathered in camps to be cared for by the Government.

"The compensation of labor is of capital importance in any view of the plantation system. My opinions with reference to Negroes purchasing their own supplies have been completely changed by the observations made in these places. The employers should be required to furnish all needed supplies at cost, on plantation, letting their only profit from the laborer be his labor."²

¹ "It is the testimony of nearly all the planters, whether Southern or Northern, that they could not have expected any set of laborers to work better than theirs. They have in some cases returned to their work after being repeatedly driven away by guerillas, and when no white dared to go near." From the report of L. B. Eaton, Supt. of Freedmen for Arkansas.

² Elsewhere in the report for 1864 Colonel S. Thomas advises a similar system. "Classify," he says, "according to capacity and willingness to labor; fix a minimum price for each class; pay full wages, and supply the freedmen, at cost, with everything they need."

"In February, authority in freedmen's affairs passed from the Treasury Department into military hands, but not into the control of the Freedmen's Department.¹

"The plantation system had gone too far to be withdrawn. Most of the hands were hired on the promise of twenty-five dollars for men and eighteen dollars for women,—finding their own rations. On no consultation with them or consent of theirs, that promise was broken by authority above that of the Freedmen's Department. Now, they were to get ten dollars for men and seven dollars for women, with three dollars a month commutation of clothing, making thirteen dollars and ten dollars. Six planters only held to the former agreement. So, per force, they went on at work for a time under the new arrangement, when, lo, comes another breach of one side of the contract, and the three dollars commutation for clothing is gone, leaving them to clothe themselves and families out of ten dollars per month. Some ten planters refused to take advantage of the last reduction on wages and have paid the promised amount."

Mr. Fiske goes on to show that deducting the average loss in time from the seventy dollars a woman could earn for ten months' labor, together with the necessary outlay

¹ Mr. Fiske refers here to the revision by General L. Thomas of Mr. Mellen's orders. The authority of the Treasury Department was not by any means relinquished, but an attempt was made, as we have seen, to make the civil and military powers act together. The officers of the Freedmen's Department, looking with a single eye to the interests of the freedmen and their employers,—represented either by private individuals or the Government,—were not always able to find themselves in sympathy either with the plans of General Thomas or the policy of the Treasury Department. Without detracting in the least from the real value of General Thomas's services, it must nevertheless be said that he was not by temperament well fitted to his task. He was essentially a vain man; volatile in spite of his capacity for devoting himself laboriously to his duties, and, with judgment somewhat too easily influenced by personal considerations, his rulings were at times both unwise and unjust. His faults, perhaps unfortunately for his work, were of the kind that were obvious to all men, and their reaction upon himself was responsible for most of the occasions in which his enterprises were only partially successful.

for supplies, she would have a balance due her at the end of the year of just nine dollars, — provided she had no one dependent upon her, and were ordinarily well.

“But suppose she has a child, — and black women *do* have children, — what then? Suppose the rebels took off the first suit of clothing she bought, suppose fraud to have been practised toward her, or in sickness her ration charged her, or that she was compelled to pay for the rations her children ate, — what then? It is sincerely to be hoped that, hereafter, labor may compete in the open market; that demand and supply shall regulate prices; and that liberality and justice, wherever practised this year, may have the advantage of their good repute among the laborers.

“The proper care of the sick, and charge of sanitary affairs, requires that each provost-marshal district should have a medical officer, who should be in control of all sanitary affairs on plantations. This year it has been impossible for those on plantations to reach medical assistance; and the planters have had no authority to keep the quarters or the persons of their laborers in good sanitary condition. As a consequence, great numbers have died. I have been on plantations where nearly half the people have died. The smallpox has prevailed very extensively.

“In reference to educational interests, the plantations are not favorable. I cannot find that any general effort has been made for the enlightenment of the people in any direction. In matters of prudence and economy, they often have not known the cost of the articles they bought. No wise, kind oversight has been had of their household affairs or modes of life. Not even the plain and fundamental provisions which, in all camps and towns, have been made for lawful marriage, have been regarded upon the farms.¹ Of course there are exceptions to these sweeping negations; but no class of men engaged in pushing their fortunes in hazardous ventures of this sort will stop for educational or moral effort among the people.

¹ The freedmen in camps and towns were under more complete supervision by officers of the Freedmen's Department. The drawbacks of a divided authority were felt most severely in the plantation enterprises.

"No one thing is made clearer by the observation of many groups of laborers than this: that the more constant oversight of a real authority is needful, both for the protection of the planter and that of the black. During the year now closing the provost-marshals have been too few. Had half the places leased been under cultivation, it would have been even more impossible for the officers charged with the protection and government of the laborers to reach them effectually."

These quotations suffice to show what a difficult proposition the leasing system proved to be, under whatever management it was prosecuted. In no other section of the country did the superintendents of freedmen come into such direct relations with the ex-slave owner as did we in the Valley, and that fact should have been taken into consideration when the bungling and indefinite division of authority was made which so greatly crippled the ability of the Freedmen's Department to exercise a proper oversight upon plantation affairs.¹

As already indicated, this division of authority was especially disastrous in regard to the care of the destitute.

Orders No. 9 did not specify how those who remained dependent upon the Government were to be provided for, but we hoped the Treasury plantation agents would meet their necessities, and allow the superintendents to restrict their efforts to the execution of justice among freedmen in

¹ Colonel James McKaye of the Freedmen Inquiry Commission, in a special report on the conditions in the lower Mississippi Valley (1864), refers very forcibly to this complication: "In the judgment of the Commission the most serious error in connection with the present arrangements for the care and protection of these people arises out of the assignment to a different agency of the care and disposal of the abandoned plantations. . . . It is the source of the greatest confusion and a perpetual collision between the different local authorities, in which not only the emancipated population but the Government itself suffers the most serious injuries and losses."

cities, and the provost-marshals among those on the plantations. After the transfer of authority, my officers remained at their posts with instructions to use every opportunity to prompt the people to accept work as it offered. They dispensed the supplies that remained to the dependent, and awaited the coming of the agents; but these did not appear. The only attempt made by the representatives of the Treasury to provide for the dependent was at Natchez, where the Home Farm organized by them was so badly managed that its sanitary condition was condemned by the Medical Director of Freedmen. Finding that all their supplies must come from the army, and realizing that they had neither forms of business to meet the situation nor men to attend to it, the plantation agents saw the inexpediency of managing freedmen affairs by any other than military instrumentalities, and they began early to ask my officers to assume charge again. These officers, however, found public interests at Natchez so entangled with private interests that they declined the responsibility until peremptorily ordered by General Brayman to assume it. It took a long time and a great deal of effort on our part to bring the condition of the freedmen to as good a standard as had been attained before this alteration of policy took place. During the period of confusion and distrust, while my officers were under the authority of the proposed scheme, Northern benevolence to a great extent had given up co-operating with us, and we were left without that source of relief for the suffering freedmen. Even more unfortunate than this was the fact that the plantation agents, from Lake Providence to Vicksburg — embracing a river line of something over fifty miles — had leased

every plantation and house, leaving neither an acre of soil nor a cabin for the dependent of the entire laboring population. We gradually recovered from the effects of this disturbance, but there were days of extreme anxiety to be bridged before we did so. I remember how in our desperation, for it amounted to that, my assistant, Colonel Samuel Thomas, and I walked the streets of Memphis far into the night, — both of us unable to sleep, both striving to find some way of meeting the difficulties which confronted us at every turn. The Negroes were returning panic-stricken from the plantations whence they had been driven by the attacks of guerillas; they were thrown upon our hands without means of support, and our resources for caring for them and leading them toward a condition of self-support had been practically cut off. The winter and spring of 1863 to the summer of 1864 were largely taken up in the effort to readjust ourselves to this change in the National policy, and the legitimate results of our previous work were therefore very much delayed. Before the situation could be righted I was obliged personally to represent these difficulties to the authorities at Washington.

To sum up the conditions of the Negro as represented by my officers, it should be said that of all the elements represented in the Valley, the independent Negro cultivator was without doubt the most successful. The Negroes were far more cautious than the white lessees in leasing land subject to unreasonable exposure to the enemy, and they were forced by their circumstances to lease in smaller tracts. The holdings on Davis Bend, for instance, ranged from five acres to one hundred. In addition to this the

Negroes naturally submitted their affairs with greater willingness to the oversight of the Freedmen's Department.

Near Helena the amount and safety of the abandoned lands were such as to lead me to direct the local superintendent to secure a large interest to the Negroes as independent planters. Some forty thousand dollars were reported as the aggregate income of the colored lessees. In this connection Colonel Thomas observes: "Many Negroes leased small pieces of land from the Treasury Department in the spring, and have worked through the year with good success. They had to gather up their stock, material, etc., from abandoned plantations near them, and depend upon various sources for food for themselves and their hands. . . . Many have made arrangements with parties in Vicksburg for such aid, binding themselves to deliver a portion of their crop at the end of the year to settle the debt. As a general thing this has not been advantageous to the Negro; but where injustice was glaring, I have interfered and made arrangements to pay with the crop the actual fair value of the debt incurred.

"Some of the Negroes had money at the end of last year, and have been able to pay for their supplies as they went along. These of course have done well. They make more money than the white lessees when they are placed on the same footing. Their wants are simple and easily supplied; they have no expensive vices; they do full work themselves, and being of the same race with those they hire, they succeed in getting good and steady work out of them.

"Those lessees who have drawn their supplies from the Government will succeed best, as they have received food

at low rates, and have been credited. Thus they have avoided sacrificing their crops in advance to pay for their subsistence."

Late in the season—in November and December, 1864,—the Freedmen's Department was restored to full control over the camps and plantations on President's Island and Palmyra or Davis Bend. Both these points had been originally occupied at the suggestion of General Grant, and were among the most successful of our enterprises for the Negroes. With the expansion of the lessee system, private interests were allowed to displace the interests of the Negroes whom we had established there under the protection of the Government, but orders issued by General N. J. T. Dana, upon whose sympathetic and intelligent co-operation my officers could always rely, restored to us the full control of these lands. The efforts of the freedmen on Davis Bend were particularly encouraging, and this property, under Colonel Thomas's able direction, became in reality the "Negro Paradise" that General Grant had urged us to make of it. Early in 1865 a system was adopted for their government in which the freedmen took a considerable part. The Bend was divided into districts, each having a sheriff and judge appointed from among the more reliable and intelligent colored men. A general oversight of the proceedings was maintained by our officer in charge, who confirmed or modified the findings of the court. The shrewdness of the colored judges was very remarkable, though it was sometimes necessary to decrease the severity of the punishments they proposed. Fines and penal service on the Home Farm were the usual sentences imposed. Petty theft,

and idleneſs, were the moſt frequent cauſes of trouble, but my officers were able to report that expoſed property was as ſafe on Davis Bend as it would be anywhere. The community diſtinctly demonſtrated the capacity of the Negro to take care of himſelf and exerciſe under honeſt and competent direction the functions of ſelf-government.

CHAPTER XIII

Second visit to Washington, and interviews with President Lincoln. New regulations of the Treasury Department are revoked. Mr. Lincoln talks of the Negro, and of the criticisms of himself. Another side to Stanton. A public assembly at the White House. Sent by Mr. Lincoln to Grant's headquarters at City Point. A dramatic interview.

OWING to the complications with representatives of the Treasury Department, and with civilians and speculators in the Valley, I determined upon a second visit to Washington and the President. The danger and injustice to which the freedmen were exposed were too great to be viewed with equanimity, and it was felt that some effort must be made to better their condition. Grant was far away before Richmond; I was acting under the orders of the Secretary of War, and in the present circumstances an appeal to the authorities at Washington seemed to be the only course open to us. Early in June of 1864 — on the second of the month, to be quite accurate — Congress had passed a law making the entire question of freedmen, refugees, and abandoned lands tributary to the Treasury Department, and on July 29, a new set of regulations was indorsed by the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Fessenden, — who had then succeeded Mr. Chase, — according to the terms of which the

officers of freedmen reported directly to the agents of the Treasury, which Department was to assume absolute control of the situation. By the end of July I had started on my journey to the Capitol, stopping over a night or two with my brother in Toledo. While there I heard an address by Fred Douglass, and had a very interesting talk with him.

On reaching Washington on August 10, I went directly to the White House. Mr. Lincoln was alert to know the facts I had come to present, and his reception of me was cordiality itself. Although he felt the force of the argument in favor of making the most out of the crops, and of introducing into that disaffected section of the country a population which might be presumed to be loyal and devoted to the interests of the Union, he was at the same time fully prepared to consider the question from every point of view. When I told him of the danger and suffering of the Negroes occasioned by raids upon plantations, of the difficulty of exercising adequate authority and restraint over operations so extended and remote from the military posts, when I related the freedom with which the lessees interpreted and applied the orders issued by the Treasury, Mr. Lincoln's keen face sharpened with indignation. "I have signed no regulations authorizing that!" he exclaimed more than once in the course of my narrative. This indeed was literally true.

The President's grasp of the situation was astonishing, especially in view of the many and serious problems that lay upon his mind. When he heard my tale to the end, he sent me promptly to the Secretary of the Treasury. Mr. Fessenden himself was out of the city at the time, but

in his absence I was referred to the Assistant Secretary, Mr. George Harrington. To him I repeated the substance of my story, dwelling on the fact that the dependent, whom we had been led to believe would be provided for by the plantation agents, had, after all, been thrown upon military support; that there were no competent instrumentalities other than military for their care; and that my assistants had been compelled to extend Government aid to numerous freedmen endeavoring to help themselves, and consequently had open contracts which could not be settled till the close of the season. In addition to these complications I referred to the difficulty of controlling the policy and acts of the planters, many of whom proved themselves disloyal to the Union in feeling as well as reckless of what might result to it indirectly from their own selfish operations. Had all the lessees been loyal and disinterested Union men, the plans of the Treasury might have succeeded admirably, but among men some of whom were union one day and rebel the next, according as their private interests might incline them, and in a territory owned principally by strong Southern sympathizers who laughed bitterly at the presumption of the United States Treasury in leasing lands to which they themselves laid violent claim, it was not to be expected that an extended system of peaceful agricultural operations could be conducted. Mr. Harrington took a common-sense view of the harm and confusion sure to result from a transfer so untimely and so unprovided for, and as a result of this statement of the plain facts of the case, the following order was communicated to Mr. Mellen, Special Supervising Agent of the First Special Agency:

170 GRANT, LINCOLN, AND THE FREEDMEN

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
August 11, 1864.

W. P. MELLEN, ESQ., *Gen'l Ag't Treasury Dep't*,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Sir, — Until further instructions all action under the regulations of July 29 (ult.), concerning Freedmen, will be suspended.

Very respectfully,

GEO. HARRINGTON,
Acting Secretary of Treasury.

It must not be supposed that so important a measure — practically rendering inoperative an act of Congress and Department orders — was taken solely on my representations. The general situation had been made known to the President in his personal interviews with Senator E. B. Washburne and General Wadsworth, both of whom had made a semi-official inspection of the condition of freedmen in the districts under my care, so that Mr. Lincoln and the members of his Cabinet with whom I came in touch were in a measure prepared for the fuller revelation I was able to make. The purpose of the Administration was not by any means to revoke the rights and privileges already accorded to lessees, but rather to see to it that all present contracts should be fulfilled with every possible regard to the rights of the people, — of whatever race or color, — and to issue no new contracts except under more favorable conditions.

Before leaving Washington, and after the return of Mr. Fessenden, I received the following communication:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
August 23, 1864.

COL. JOHN EATON, JR.

Sir, — The suspension of the Regulations, whereby this Department contemplated taking immediate control of the Freedmen, has been approved by the Secretary.

In directing such suspension, it was the expectation and desire of the Department that the system and arrangements heretofore inaugurated and now being prosecuted under you should be continued without interruption until the crops now in are gathered, and the present season closed, and until this Department is prepared in all respects to assume such control under the law.

Very respectfully,

GEO. HARRINGTON,

Assistant Secretary of Treasury.

This order was a distinct advantage to our Department. It had long been evident to us who were working on the ground, that no one thing had been made clearer by our experience than the separate functions of Government which the War and the Treasury Departments were qualified to exercise, and to which they were by right assigned; the Treasury, that is, to the collection of revenue and the disbursement of funds; the War Office, to the prosecution of military operations and the execution of justice, whilst civil authority should be in abeyance. The facts in our experience showed that any confounding of the functions of the Departments must create confusion and fail of good results. In respect to the freedmen as a whole, it had become plain that the Treasury should control the funds and revenues, as it did for other operations, while the War Department, possessing the only efficient organization for such service, should be given facilities to provide for the dependent, and left free to administer their industrial and educational affairs, and to execute justice toward the freedmen as to all others in the regions under control of the army. It was a vast encouragement to me to find the Administration in sympathy with this view of the case. It may as well be stated at once in this connection that

the contemplated action of the Treasury Department under the act of Congress, and the regulations of July 29, never went into effect in the Mississippi Valley. There were some spasmodic efforts made by individuals to exercise more extended authority, but on the whole my officers encountered little further difficulty in dealing with the agents of the Treasury. The position of the Freedmen's Department in its relation to the Treasury, and to the Government generally, remained unchanged until the organization of the Freedmen's Bureau was effected.

During my stay in Washington, which, partly at Mr. Lincoln's expressed desire, extended over a week or so, I had the privilege of many talks with the President. As on the occasion of my former visit, he would tell me to come in after the routine of the day was over, and, as at that time, he would manifest in his talk with me the deepest interest in all the elements of the Negro character which had been revealed to our officers in the course of our association with the freedmen. These talks disclosed still further the profundity of Mr. Lincoln's nature, and the correct understanding he possessed of the Negro and the situation in the South. A series of questions would bring out the information that had come to me concerning the more remarkable colored men and women who had escaped from slavery and come within our jurisdiction, and Lincoln would then point out with keenest interest what such men and women might do if they could return to their homes and spread the information of what they had seen,—of what freedom meant to those who had attained it: honorable service in our armies for the men, compensated labor for those of their mothers, sisters, and

wives who were able to work, protection to those who were not, and, for their children, schools.

In connection with this subject he once alluded to John Brown's raid, deprecating alike its method and its untimeliness, and lamenting the bloodshed which it caused. Now, however, that the war was upon us and there could be no withdrawal from any of the questions at issue, that wonderfully fertile brain of his was considering every possible means by which the Negro could be secured in his freedom, and at the same time prove a source of strength to the Union. The President's heart yearned for peace; his mind sought out every means of stopping the bloodshed. He referred to the really astonishing extent to which the colored people were informed in regard to the progress of the war, and remarked that he wished the "grapevine telegraph" could be utilized to call upon the Negroes of the interior peacefully to leave the plantations and seek the protection of our armies. This as a war-time measure he considered legitimate. Apart from the numbers it would add to our military forces, he explained the effect such an exodus would have upon the industry of the South. The Confederate soldiers were sustained by provisions raised by Negro labor; withdraw that labor, and the young men in the Southern army would soon be obliged to go home to "raise hog and hominy," and thus promote the collapse of the Confederacy.

Mr. Lincoln spoke with the utmost frankness of the criticism to which he and his policy had been subjected, and in the course of one such conversation I referred to the address by Frederick Douglass which I had recently heard. I described those points in Mr. Lincoln's course which

were approved by Douglass, and those on which he differed from the President. In the terribly rough passages through which the colored race was emerging into freedom it was not strange that Mr. Douglass, as the leading representative of that race, should find much to criticise. The Confederates had threatened not to treat as prisoners of war any captured colored soldiers or their officers. I was one of those officers. My heart was heavy with the mistreatment and suffering of the Negroes in the conquered territory over which my supervision extended. Douglass and I had found much to talk about, and I was able to give Mr. Lincoln a fairly clear notion of his point of view. The Negro orator felt keenly that our measures of retaliation against cruelty to Negro soldiers were not sharp enough. When I had finished, the President asked if Mr. Douglass knew what he had written Governor Hahn about Negro suffrage. Hahn had but recently been appointed Governor of Louisiana and was trying to reorganize the State. Mr. Lincoln rose as he spoke, and drawing from his private desk near at hand a copy of his letter of March 13 to Hahn, he read to me the famous passage in regard to the elective franchise: "I congratulate you on having fixed your name in history as the first Free State Governor of Louisiana. Now you are about to have a convention, which, among other things, will probably define the elective franchise, I barely suggest for your private consideration whether some of the colored people may not be let in, as, for instance, the very intelligent, and *especially those who have fought gallantly in our ranks.*

"They would probably help, in some future time to come, to keep the jewel of liberty in the family of freedom.

But this is only a suggestion, not to the public, but to you alone."

When he had finished reading, the President of the United States and the greatest man of his time asked me, with that curious modesty characteristic of him, if I thought Mr. Douglass could be induced to come to see him. I replied that I rather thought he could. It was soon arranged that Douglass should visit Washington and see the President. Some of my readers may have heard Mr. Douglass's own account of this visit. Ostensibly he was in Washington to deliver an address. He saw Mr. Lincoln. I knew when the interview was to occur, and also where Mr. Douglass was stopping, — at the home of Mr. Lee, a wealthy colored man in the city. Immediately after the interview I called upon Douglass, and found him pacing the long, old-fashioned parlors in a state of extreme agitation. He did not know that I was in Washington, and greeted me in surprise; but nothing could distract his mind for long from that interview. "I have just come from President Lincoln," he said, making no attempt to suppress his excitement. "He treated me as a man; he did not let me feel for a moment that there was any difference in the color of our skins! The President is a most remarkable man. I am satisfied now that he is doing all that circumstances will permit him to do. He asked me a number of questions, which I am preparing to answer in writing," and he pointed to the writing materials on a table near him. There was never any doubt afterwards of Mr. Douglass's enthusiastic regard for the President. He had seen the situation for the first time as it appeared to Mr. Lincoln's eyes; he had discovered Mr. Lincoln's mas-

terly power in dealing with it,—and, parenthetically it might be remarked, with him,—and ever after, as is evidenced by informal testimony as well as by the orations which he delivered over the country, he told the story of Mr. Lincoln's greatness and excellence. Mr. Lincoln, on his part, had previously assured me that considering the conditions from which Douglass rose, and the position to which he had attained, he was, in his judgment, one of the most meritorious men in America.

This little story, insignificant perhaps in itself, illustrates the President's skill in handling the men who were inclined to find fault with his policy. Something of the same trait was exhibited in his treatment of Horace Greeley, whose spirit of fault-finding was sometimes exceptionally ill-advised and disturbing. He told me of his motive in sending Mr. Greeley to deal with Mr. Thompson, ex-Secretary of the Interior, and at that time agent of the Confederacy in Canada. Nothing resulted from Mr. Greeley's mission,—nor had Mr. Lincoln expected that anything would result,—but it gave Mr. Greeley certain definite and vivid ideas of the difficulties of practical politics.

Yet another illustration occurs to me of the complications with which Mr. Lincoln had to deal,—not infrequently among members of his own Cabinet. He was sitting one day in his easy-chair with a large quantity of commissions spread out before him awaiting his signature. As we talked, he signed the papers, occasionally referring by name to the recipient of the commission. One man whom he mentioned I knew to be hostile to the President's interests, and called his attention to the fact. "I suppose,"

said Mr. Lincoln, imperturbably signing the paper, "that I am constantly giving appointments to men in that attitude." So great was the opposition to Mr. Lincoln's re-election at this time, that I not unnaturally felt that a good deal of care ought to be exercised in guarding from his enemies positions of any degree of influence. In this case the man receiving the appointment was an ardent supporter of Mr. Chase, who, as is well known, was somewhat antagonistic to Lincoln and not without ambitions for the Presidency. It was very soon after Mr. Chase had resigned from the Treasury. There had been serious differences between the Secretary of the Treasury and the President, but Mr. Lincoln listened with pleasure to all I could say in Mr. Chase's favor. From my college days he had been for me something of an ideal. He was a native of the same State, graduated from the same college, and as Governor of Ohio had won the admiration of every one by his masterly conduct in bringing that State out of bankruptcy. As a resident of Toledo and superintendent of schools there, I had become much interested in his career, and had employed a niece of his, I remember, in one of the schools under my superintendence. Mr. Lincoln was very earnest in commending what he had done, but at the same time he was compelled reluctantly to admit that his idiosyncracies as a cabinet officer would have tended to defeat the main aims of the Administration. This I was quite prepared to realize, having experienced complications in my own work which were in part derived from Mr. Chase's Negro policy. In my enthusiasm for another member of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet, I exclaimed, "Mr. President, you meet with no such difficulties from your Premier!" I had

originally looked upon the failure to nominate Mr. Seward for the Presidency as a great defeat of Republican principles, and had expected everything of him as the head of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet. My amazement, therefore, could hardly be expressed when the President, who was leaning back in his arm-chair, his great length stretched out at ease, his head thrown back, suddenly raised himself and swung the large effective head forward until his chin rested on his bosom, exclaiming, "Seward knows that I am his master!" He then went on to tell me how he had pushed the prompt surrender of Mason and Slidell as an act of justice toward England, realizing that in the light of international law the Trent affair might justly have given ground for reprisal. Seward would have temporized, and so risked a most unwelcome complication with England.

I must not omit to record that while I was in Washington on this occasion, Mr. Lincoln sent me to the office of the

Sec. of War of War,
pleased per & hear Col.
Baton, whom Gen. Grant
thinks is one of the best
Confederate agents,
Aug. 12, 1864 *A. Lincoln*

Secretary of War, in order that I might acquaint him with my view of affairs in the Valley and receive any suggestions he might offer. I had seen Mr. Stanton on my

former visit, and well remembered the dignity and impressiveness of his audiences. There was an air of statesmanship about him which lent itself to all his procedures, and the atmosphere of his offices led one to feel that idlers and triflers were not welcome. The Secretary, of course, had his stated hours for receiving, and at those times officers of all ranks gathered in the room adjoining his private office

on the second floor of the old War Department building. The head of the War Office would issue from his sanctum accompanied by one of the officers of the staff, who was expected to facilitate matters for the Secretary and his guests. Mr. Stanton's conversation with each was very brisk, not to say brusque, and the interviews were almost invariably short; but they were also pleasant, unless, as sometimes happened, the officer whom Mr. Stanton was addressing had failed in what Mr. Stanton considered his duty. Then it was apt to go hard with that officer. But there was another side to the Secretary which has not often enough been recorded. No one with whom I had talked while in Washington showed a keener interest in the Negro problem than did he, and to him I spoke with the utmost freedom of our experiences. On one occasion, I remember, he took me with him to his inner office, to which he withdrew at the close of his public audiences, accompanied sometimes by those with whom he desired further or more confidential talk. We were speaking of the suffering among the Negroes in the Valley, and I had told him a peculiarly pathetic story. When I had finished, Mr. Stanton's face—perhaps the most immovable and altogether inscrutable face I have ever seen—was working, and his eyes were full of tears.

Another matter, by the way, which greatly disturbed the President at this time, was the demand to have Stanton removed. However these two men differed in many important details, they stood firmly by each other in the great issues, and Lincoln was most unwilling to displace the Secretary.

Stories of Mr. Lincoln's tenderness are so numerous

that it seems scarcely worth while to add to them, but the following illustration of the personal distress which the sufferings of others brought to him I cannot forbear to tell. One afternoon, in the midst of our conversation, we heard the discharge of musketry. The wind, blowing from the Virginia side, wafted the sound from across the river. Mr. Lincoln arose, and, stepping past his chair, looked out of the open window toward the Virginia shore. When he turned again, the tears were running down his cheeks. "This is the day," said he, "when they shoot deserters. I am wondering whether I have used the pardoning power as much as I ought. I know some of our officers feel that I have used it with so much freedom as to demoralize the army and destroy the discipline." The President felt especially lenient toward those who had slept at their posts when on picket duty. "I feel," he went on, more to himself, I thought, than to me, "that the picket who sleeps at his post is imperilling, it may be, the entire army, and I know how serious that is. But the officers only see the force of military discipline; perhaps it is right, but I see other things. I feel how the man may have been exposed to long watches with no opportunity for proper rest, and so sleep steals upon him unawares. I would not relax the discipline of the army, but I do want to be considerate of every case." As he talked, his great, good heart seemed to open itself and allow one to observe its workings. For a man so relentless with himself in the performance of his own duty, Lincoln's charity toward others was little short of phenomenal. There is much testimony to show how he suffered, and how he strove to exercise the pardoning power whenever possible. In the case of signing warrants for twenty-

four deserters, he said: "There are already too many weeping widows in the United States. For God's sake don't ask me to add to the number." And on a different occasion, "Well, I think the boy can do us more good above the ground than under."

At the time of one of my visits to Washington — and I think it was during this same summer of 1864 — Bishop Simpson was advertised to deliver an address, widely known at the time, on "The Providence of God as seen in Our War." He spoke in the Methodist Church at the corner of Four-and-a-half and F streets. I made it a point to attend, and betook myself early to the church in anticipation of a crowd. I was shown by the usher to a vacant pew near the centre. Presently, as the church filled up, the Secretary of War came in and was shown to a seat immediately in front of me, and a little later Mr. Lincoln entered the pew in front of him. When the sermon was over and I was preparing to find my way out, the Bishop was escorted to the President's pew, and the soldiers, as was always the case whenever Mr. Lincoln appeared, began to flock about him, completely blocking the pews and making egress impossible. I thus heard the President express to Bishop Simpson his satisfaction with the way in which the Bishop had traced the course of events bearing on the progress of the country. With his customary gleam of humor, the President added, "But, Bishop, you did not 'strike 'ile.'" This was widely reported in the press at the time, for the discovery of the great oil fields was new then. It certainly illustrated Lincoln's shrewd appreciation of current events.

Arriving one day at the White House somewhat earlier

than I had intended, I found myself in the midst of the crowd to whom Mr. Lincoln was giving audience. The scene will never be effaced from my memory. Although it was near the hour when the public reception was supposed to be over, the room was still thronged with the multitude that sought his attention. The President was seated near the corner of his long office table, around which he was accustomed to gather with his Cabinet, and near him stood the trusted guardian, who, though ostensibly there to aid the callers in preferring to Mr. Lincoln their requests, was in reality guarding against any attack upon his life. It was a large room, and filled with applicants, save for the space directly in front of the table, which served as the approach to the President and was kept free. The crowd was as miscellaneous in character as it was large. Men, women, and even children, waited their turn to grasp the President's hand, and in most cases to ask some favor. There were privates and officers of the Union army, and civilians of every degree of loyalty, as well as some avowedly disloyal. Above them all on this particular occasion, I recollect the towering, manly form of Mr. Lincoln's pastor, the Reverend Dr. Gurley. I found my way around the table at which the President was seated, and stood somewhat behind him and to his right, in such a position that I saw the President's face as he greeted each new comer, and heard much of what was said. He had a thoroughly characteristic word for each one who accosted him,—no small test of personality in itself,—and in dealing with men who offered excuses for not serving in the army there was no lack of witty repartee. It was difficult to impose

on Mr. Lincoln in spite of his kind heart. He made short work of frauds of any description, and kept his rectitude of judgment and freedom from sentimentality in the face of all appeals to the sentiment of which he had so much. I well remember a lady who came to ask her husband's release from prison. Mr. Lincoln's quick, penetrating question soon brought to light the fact that the husband had taken up arms against the Union, and being captured by our forces had been sent to one of the military prisons. The President's manner lost no particle of its kindness, but it was full of decision, and calculated to appeal to every sense of womanhood and dignity the applicant possessed. Had not her husband gone out to destroy the Union? Had it not been necessary for the Government to defend itself against such as he, by calling the husbands all over the land from their homes? While he was in prison he was powerless to harm the Union, and his cause was so much weakened. The woman soon realized the unfitness of her request, and ceased to importune him. Lincoln's reception of the soldiers who were among the crowd could not have been more impressive. Small wonder the army adored him. The stream of visitors passed by. In the front line of those who surrounded the open space before the President, waiting their turn, was a little lad who evidently hesitated to approach him, but the kindly motion of Mr. Lincoln's hand brought the child at once to the good man's side. The President bent his great height, and the little boy confided to him his request. I did not hear what was said,—so confidential was the interview between the small boy and the President,—but there was

no doubt he had got what he wanted, for he ran off presently with no attempt to disguise his delight.

When the crowd was gone at last and I had taken the proffered seat at Mr. Lincoln's side, I made an allusion to the scene I had just witnessed, remarking its impressiveness, and the tax I feared it must be upon himself. A wave of sadness passed over the President; he confessed the strain these diverse demands made upon him, and said how greatly he desired that no case of merit should come to him and fail to receive the attention it deserved, and that, on the other hand, no unjust demand should mislead him into making a mistake.

It was during an absorbingly interesting conversation with Mr. Lincoln, very soon after my arrival in Washington, that the President spoke to me of his renomination. The freedom with which he discussed public affairs with me often filled me with amazement, and many other men have testified to his openness when once his confidence was gained. He spoke quite fully of the opposition he encountered, and expressed some surprise that there should be so much antagonism to his policy in the ranks of the great abolitionists. I think the criticism of such men as Greeley and Wendell Phillips was a great grief and trial to him. Of a well-known abolitionist and orator he once exclaimed in one of his rare moments of impatience, "He's a thistle! I don't see why God lets him live!" And of a certain Senator for whose principles and methods he was without mercy he once said, "He's too crooked to lie still!" The vision invoked of the uneasy politician was irresistibly vivid.

Upon the whole, the summer of 1864 was the most dis-

couraging period of the war. Battle had followed upon battle; our soldiers were laying down their lives in unnumbered thousands, and still resistance was strong. Vigorous leaders in the South were resolute, and their people responded to them with remarkable vigor and determination. Disaffection had grown in the North. Confederate agencies were at work on Canadian soil; Lincoln's own friends had begun to criticise him,—sometimes for being too slow, sometimes for being too fast. The disaffection began to organize. True, he had been renominated, but there was an effort making in some quarters to find some one else to run, simply, as it was declared, to save the Union. Of all this the President spoke freely. There was no note of aggressiveness nor of false modesty in all he said. If he knew himself, said he, he had little ambition to be re-elected, though it would gratify him to receive such mark of approval from the American people. Over and above everything else he desired that the Union should be saved, and if any one else could save it better than he, he was ready to step aside. Yet it seemed that what he had passed through prepared him to serve with increasing efficiency to the end of the war. To me, as to others who have recorded the phrase, he remarked that he "thought it might be risky,—swapping horses in midstream." Mr. Lincoln questioned me keenly as to what I had seen or heard of the opposition, inquiring the attitude of the army in so far as I knew it, and analyzing the relations of the several leaders to the political campaign. By his manner, I was impressed with the idea that he had some special problem on his mind. Presently it transpired what this was.

"Do you know," queried the President, "what General Grant thinks of the effort now making to nominate him [Grant] for the presidency? Has he spoken of it to you?"¹

I answered that I knew nothing; that I had been so far away from Grant since the opening of the campaign that I had not heard what he thought.

"Well," said Lincoln, "the disaffected are trying to get him to run, but I don't think they can do it. If he is the great General we think he is, he must have some consciousness of it, and know that he cannot be satisfied with himself and secure the credit due for his great generalship if he does not finish his job. I do not believe," he repeated, "that they can get him to run."

The President then asked me if I would go to Grant's headquarters at City Point and learn what he had to say about the campaign. He seemed to feel that Grant trusted me and would be likely to talk to me. I had no idea what the result of such a mission might be, and said so, but declared myself ready to go if Mr. Lincoln desired it.

It was distinctly not the personal rivalry with Grant which Mr. Lincoln dreaded, but rather the loss which our cause would suffer if Grant could be induced to go into politics before the military situation was secure. This the President made unmistakably plain to me. His confidence in Grant was one of the finest things I have ever witnessed. The generals, he said, had failed him, one after another, until Grant had come to the front.

"Before Grant took command of the Eastern forces,"

¹ For an account of this incident, of which the sequel follows on pp. 190-191, see also Tarbell's "Life of Lincoln," Vol. II, pp. 199-200.

said the President, "we did not sleep at night here in Washington. We began to fear the rebels would take the Capitol, and once in possession of that, we feared that foreign countries might acknowledge the Confederacy. Nobody could foresee the evil that might come from the destruction of records and of property. But since Grant has assumed command on the Potomac, I have made up my mind that whatever it is possible to have done, Grant will do, and whatever he does n't do, I don't believe is to be done. And now," he added with emphasis, "we sleep at night."¹

Before I left him, the President took one of the blank cards on which he so often wrote his instructions, and handed me the order here reproduced:

*Allow the bearer, Col.
Eaton to pass to, and
visit Gen. Grant at
Cty. Point, Md.*

Aug. 12, 1864 A. Lincoln

I started at once for City Point by way of Annapolis. I was informed by some authorities that my transportation was "not regular," nevertheless I was passed along to my destination. I left the boat, I remember, at Fortress Monroe, intending to have a few moments' conversation with the superintendent then in charge of the Negroes there, but the boat went off without me and I was obliged to stay where I was until the following day. I was very

¹ The President's confidence in Grant's ability to defend the Capitol had not wavered, although scarcely a month had passed since Early's troops had threatened Washington. It will be remembered, however, that even on that occasion Grant had hurried reinforcements to the city before Early, who had been bravely detained by Gen. Lew. Wallace, had made up his mind to attack.

glad of the opportunity of seeing the Government's settlements for freedmen at this place, where such careful plans had been matured for their welfare. The freedmen were in an excellent state, and the conditions far more easily dealt with than in the Mississippi Valley. The next morning I reached City Point, and learned that Grant with his body guard were out on the lines at the front. After a pleasant talk with Major Bowers, whom I found at headquarters, and who put me in touch with much of the gossip of the army, the tramp of horses was heard, and Major Bowers, saying that Grant was returning, despatched a messenger to the General to report my arrival. The messenger returned with instructions for me to join Grant at once in his office tent, where he gave me a hearty welcome. We talked until supper was called for the staff. Grant messed with his officers, joining with them on terms of familiarity at a common table. I was given a seat next the General, and we had a most enjoyable meal. Ostentation did not develop with him along with his fame. After supper we returned to the tent and talked until past midnight. The President had charged me with several messages to his "fighting General," and these I communicated promptly,—fulfilling all save the main object of my mission. Grant opened his mail as we talked, referring sometimes to the contents of his letters. Some of them he answered on the spot, writing out his replies with his own hand, and turning them over to be copied. Our conversation was most informal and familiar. As I listened to the story of his difficulties and disappointments, which seemed to me almost more than a man could bear, I held my peace in regard to my own trials in the Mississippi

Valley, although it was a sore temptation to talk them over with one whom I knew of old for his sympathetic understanding and sagacity. The disaster of the mine at Petersburg and the difficulty of throwing the troops across the James weighed on Grant's mind particularly. He said he had given special orders to push ahead and not delay in the crater. In regard to crossing the James, it had been a grave disappointment to him that General Smith should have failed to bear out the brilliant record he had made for himself at Chattanooga. That disappointment was one of a series to which many of his officers had subjected him during the preceding months. The scheme to replace Stanton with General Butler also troubled him, as it did Lincoln. Mr. Stanton had not always cooperated fearlessly with Grant, but the General was far from wishing to have him removed. He said, I remember, that if any change must be made, he would recommend his chief-of-staff, General Rawlins, as Stanton's successor. Added to all Grant's other difficulties was a demand made by the Governors of the Northern States upon the authorities at Washington for the return of some fifty thousand able-bodied men to their respective States to maintain order during the approaching elections, and also to put down the organized resistance to the draft which was developing in some quarters in the North. It will be remembered that secret organizations of disloyal character, such as "The Knights of the Golden Circle," and others, had been doing much mischief among the disaffected. A meeting of the Governors of the loyal States had resulted in this demand for troops which General Halleck had summarized and forwarded to Grant at City Point. The

General had replied that he would send the troops if required to do so, but that it would involve the changing of the plan of campaign and the prolongation of the war by necessitating the withdrawal of the army from the front of Richmond.

All that Grant had to tell me interested me intensely, but I saw myself no nearer to the accomplishment of my mission, for the General kept firmly to the military phases of the questions we discussed. Finally a conversation I had had with several men on the train, when on my way to Washington, occurred to me as a possible means of bringing about the discussion I wanted. These men having previously seen me with General Grant during the earlier days in the Valley, and probably thinking that I might know something of Grant's political bias, asked me if I thought the General could be induced to run as a citizen's candidate for the Presidency. I repeated this conversation now to the General. "The question is," said I, "not whether you wish to run, but whether you could be compelled to run in answer to the demand of the people for a candidate who should save the Union." We had been talking very quietly, but Grant's reply came in an instant and with a violence for which I was not prepared. He brought his clenched fists down hard on the strap arms of his camp-chair. "They can't do it! They can't compel me to do it!"

Emphatic gesture was not a strong point with Grant, and what I had just witnessed showed me that he had been stirred profoundly.

"Have you said this to the President?" I asked.

"No," said Grant, "I have not thought it worth while

to assure the President of my opinion. I consider it as important for the cause that he should be elected as that the army should be successful in the field."

Early the next morning we parted, and he sent me to Norfolk on the headquarters boat. From thence I went as quickly as possible to Washington. When I again entered Mr. Lincoln's room, he greeted me with an eager question :

"Well," said he, "what did you find?"

"You were right," I said, and repeated the emphatic answer Grant had made to the proposition.

The President fairly glowed with satisfaction. "I told you," said he, "they could not get him to run until he had closed out the rebellion."

In the course of the conversation which followed, the President wanted to know what Grant had said of the despatch he had sent to City Point in response to Grant's letter about the fifty thousand troops. I had left City Point before the despatch had been received, and upon hearing this, Mr. Lincoln repeated to me his famous message of August 17:

"I have seen your despatch expressing your unwillingness to break your hold where you are. Neither am I willing. Hold on with a bulldog grip, and chew and choke as much as possible."

So closed one of the most interesting incidents that befell me during my visit to Washington in 1864.

CHAPTER XIV

Education for the Negro in the Mississippi Valley under the auspices of the Freedmen's Department. A centralized school system established September, 1864. Other educational and philanthropic efforts. The Negro as he appeared to the officers of freedmen. Difficulties confronting the Freedmen's Department: what it accomplished.

UPON the whole the most important and probably the most permanent result of the military effort to secure justice and well-being to the Negro was the establishment of a rudimentary but well articulated school system. Under the institution of slavery, which had been maintained with special vigor in parts of the district within my jurisdiction, any organized effort to educate the Negro was of course discountenanced. In Memphis, for instance, colored schools were prohibited by municipal law,¹ and such statutes, as is well known, were but too frequent throughout the South. Even after the city passed under Federal control in June, 1862, the opposition to Negro education of even the most elementary character

¹ Sec. 4. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, that no one shall be admitted as a pupil (in the city schools) but white persons, residing within the city limits, between the ages of six and twenty years. (An act amendatory to the Memphis City Charter, passed Feb. 25, 1851. — 1860 Edition, Art. IV, Title 1, Page 157, Memphis City Charter.)

was so intense that nothing beyond some desultory private instruction under military auspices could be attempted.

The officers of the Freedmen's Department, however, would have discharged their trust very imperfectly had they not felt that the mental and moral enlightenment of the people committed to their charge was a great object to be secured. Employment and protection were necessities preceding instruction in order only, — not in importance. Accordingly from the very first, efforts were made to secure the assistance of army chaplains, and such other men as were likely to feel the importance of this matter; the aid, also, of benevolent persons was welcomed and encouraged, whether offered by independent workers or societies. Almost as soon as the desperate condition of the Negroes became known in the loyal states, representatives of various organizations found their way to the settlements and cities, aiding in the educational as well as the relief work among the suffering refugees. Some of the societies were old and long-established, like the American Missionary Association, — to which belongs the honor of opening, in September, 1861, at Fortress Monroe, the first school for the contrabands. Other organizations had been newly created in response to the sudden need of the country. The American Missionary Association, the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission, and the Society of Friends were the first in the field. After the surrender of Vicksburg and the occupation of Natchez, when the control of the Union armies over the territory bordering the Mississippi became more assured, and our field of operations more extended, a large number of these voluntary laborers came to aid in the educational work.

Supplementing what had been General Grant's policy from the first, the Government formally ordered¹ that all persons, duly accredited, who should come into the field for this purpose should be furnished with transportation, quarters, rations, and places in which to teach, so far as this should prove possible. The Freedmen's Department was thus put into direct relations with the agents of the aid associations, yet the connection of the Department with such teachers was, after all, somewhat informal. I could do little more than advise with regard to the distribution of teachers and the location of schools. I had no authority either to superintend their schools, enforce the needed discipline, secure uniformity of school-books, or regulate in any manner the conduct of teachers and agents. Under these circumstances the work of the Department could be efficient only in part. We had no funds to provide schoolhouses where these were lacking, and many of the teachers and missionaries had to live and teach in places entirely inconvenient and inadequate. Sometimes, indeed, the mere shade of a tree was the only shelter afforded to a school. Later we applied a part of the Freedmen Fund to educational purposes. The schools

¹ Special orders, No. 63, Vicksburg, Miss., Sept. 29, 1863 [Extract] VI—Transportation will be furnished for persons and goods, for the benefit of these people [Negroes] on Government Transports and Military Railroads within the Department on the order of the General Superintendent.

VII—Citizens voluntarily laboring for the benefit of these people, saving as they do to the Government, cost of labor in providing for their care, will, when properly accredited by the General Superintendent, be entitled to rations, quarters, and transportation on Government Transports and Military Railroads within the Department.

By order of the Secretary of War.

L. THOMAS,
Adjutant-General.

were almost uniformly without desks or proper seats, while the diversity among the few and old text-books was such that not even a small class could be provided with uniform readers or school-books of any sort. In the freedmen camps the situation was even more unsatisfactory than in the cities. Quarters and accommodations were worse, and in some cases it was found all but impossible to maintain the schools with any degree of regularity. It was intended that on the leased plantations schools and teachers should be located and maintained, but here experience soon taught us that men who entered upon cotton cultivation with the intention of making a great fortune in a single year were not to be expected voluntarily to meet our expectations in this respect. With few exceptions the planters made no effort to secure instruction for the people whom they employed; indeed in most of the places it was entirely impracticable for teachers to reside, because they were unsafe for any one.

Added to these difficulties were the unavoidable complications, friction and jealousies bound to come when so many independent agencies are working side by side to accomplish identical results. The temptation among the teachers to secure the easiest places and those in which success should be most obvious, together with the not unnatural loyalty of each agent to what he conceived to be the interest of his particular organization, led occasionally to forms of self-seeking strangely at variance with the heroic self-sacrifices which the same individuals were constantly making. Even when these elements of discontent and failure were not present, the lack of systematic co-operation was such that it became evident that some central

authority should be established if the interests of education among the Negroes were not to be sacrificed. Accordingly the following order was issued to me by General Thomas, placing the schools under the control of the Freedmen's Department:

CINCINNATI, OHIO, Sept. 26, 1864.

Orders, No. 26, [Extract]

Until the Treasury Department takes possession of the Freedmen under the law:

11. . . . To prevent confusion and embarrassment, the General Superintendent of Freedmen will designate officers, subject to his orders, as Superintendents of Colored Schools, through whom he will arrange the location of all schools, teachers, and the occupation of houses, and other details pertaining to the education of Freedmen. All officers commanding, and others, will render the necessary aid.

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By order of the Secretary of War,

L. THOMAS, *Adjutant-General*.

In carrying out this order, Rev. L. H. Cobb, a college classmate of mine, and a very capable man, was appointed Superintendent of Colored Schools in the District of Memphis; Rev. James A. Hawley and Rev. Mr. Buckley — both chaplains of colored regiments — served in the District of Vicksburg; Mr. C. S. Crossman, formerly a teacher in the Toledo public schools, occupied the same office in Natchez; Rev. Joel Grant, also an army chaplain, in the District of Arkansas; Mr. W. F. Allen at Helena; and Mr. J. L. Roberts at Columbus, Kentucky. Later, — on February 24, 1865, — in addition to the efficient force thus formed, Rev. Joseph Warren, D.D., a very scholarly and capable man, was made General Superintendent of Colored Schools throughout the Department. I trans-

ferred my headquarters at once from Vicksburg to Memphis, and there met in conference a number of the newly appointed school superintendents, the present and former post Superintendents of Freedmen at Memphis, — Captain Walker and Chaplain Fiske, — and as many representatives of the aid associations as could be brought together. After careful discussion we published a circular under the terms of which each school superintendent was to report directly to the local or resident superintendent of freedmen, who was charged with the duty of procuring and controlling all school property. Cities and towns were divided into school wards, and each pupil was required to attend the school in his or her district. The location of the teachers from the different societies was to be determined by consultation between the school superintendent and the society's agent, but the school hours, the questions of classification, the text-books, and matters of school organization and discipline were put entirely in the hands of the superintendents appointed by me. The most important regulation concerned the payment of tuition fees. Exorbitant charges had been made in too many instances by irresponsible persons, — in one or two cases by unqualified Negro teachers, — and it was of the utmost importance that this abuse should be authoritatively checked. In the State of Louisiana, which had already undergone partial reconstruction, General Banks had issued orders establishing a free school system for the freedmen, and one vital feature of this system was the school tax levied on all land owners who employed Negroes in the field.¹ No system

¹ See Report of the United States Commissioner of Education, 1900-1901, Chapter XI. Common Schools in the South, 1861 to 1876, by A.D. Mayo, p. 437.

of taxation of property could possibly have been applied over the whole territory covered by my officers, who were the representatives of a military organization. With the exception of Tennessee, no one of the States whose freedmen were controlled by me had as yet been found ready for reconstructive measures, but in default of the possibility of applying a tax upon property we collected from the parents a tuition fee, which did much toward rendering the schools self-supporting, and also toward developing a sense of dignity and responsibility in the Negro. The tendency of the fee system is in opposition to the principles of the American public school; it is open to the abuses of the so-called "pauper system," prevalent in the old days in the South, and it could never under any circumstances be advocated as a permanent or admirable type for a school the standing of which was established and assured by municipal or State government. Our freedmen schools, however, were conducted independently of civil agencies,—sometimes, indeed, against the vigorous opposition of such civil agencies as then were active in rebel communities. They were necessarily organized from motley elements, both administrative and pedagogic. But the fee system, as we applied it, whatever objections might be raised against it in theory, worked admirably in practice under the conditions amid which our work was done. As a matter of fact, its moral influence upon the Negro was far more salutary than the immediate and unconditional application of the free school privilege could have been. The tuition fee varied from one dollar and twenty-five cents—later reduced to one dollar—to twenty-five cents a month for each scholar,

according to the ability of the parents to meet the expense. In some cases a fee of ten cents was received from those able to pay so much and no more, while in cases of absolute inability to pay, the child, of course, received tuition free. Tickets of attendance were issued to all pupils, and these served as a means of identification and as a receipt to those paying the fee. There was at first some little difficulty in applying this regulation, and during the first month or more of its enforcement the attendance was somewhat reduced, but very soon there was a steady increase in attendance, which practically continued until the Department was turned over to the Freedmen's Bureau. Dr. Cobb, in his report on the Memphis Schools for January, 1865, speaks of some families "who will have nothing but a full-priced ticket." He intimates that the habit of paying promptly their tuition fees will "bring the clear ring of prompt, manly honesty out of these young minds and hearts, and lay the foundation for business in the future men and women we are teaching. It teaches them the honorable law of self-support." He also carefully explains that no demand is made of those who are unable to pay. "I do, nevertheless, insist that a vested interest is better every way for all who can pay even a dime. . . . I think it could be shown that, as a rule, full-pay scholars are the most constant, punctual, and studious. They wish to get the worth of their money. There are honorable exceptions to this among the free scholars, but they are such as make a sacrifice to come even on a free ticket. They must have food and clothing; and it is more for some to get these than for others to pay for everything." This testimony is repre-

sentative of the evidence offered by all but one of our superintendents. In Arkansas Mr. Grant reported at one time that the Negroes who could not pay shrank from attending schools "as paupers," and as a consequence the attendance was somewhat reduced.¹ As the Negroes of that State, however, were especially thrifty and self-respecting, the loss in attendance was not serious. The higher prices paid for slaves in Arkansas had carried many of the most valuable Negroes to that market. As a community they exhibited some remarkable qualities, even during the war, and at the present day Arkansas is noteworthy for the many Negroes of wealth and influence residing there. An interesting illustration of the self-respecting and capable qualities of the freedmen in that State occurred in connection with the war-time schools. Until General Steele's occupation in 1863 the laws against a Negro's acquiring money had been particularly strict. Nevertheless, my officers reported that the Negroes of Little Rock formed a Freedmen's School Society in March, 1865, and by their own exertions made the city schools free for the rest of the year. To the best of my belief, these were the first free schools in Arkansas — whether for whites or blacks — to subscribe and pay in full the compensation of the teachers.

Industrial schools formed another element in our educational plan. The cast-off soldiers' clothing, as well as the second-hand clothing and new goods collected in the North, had to be adapted and made up to meet the neces-

¹ Extracts from Reports of Superintendents of Freedmen, compiled by Rev. Joseph Warren, D.D., from documents in the office of the General Superintendent, 1864-1865. From this contemporary record are drawn many of the facts presented in this chapter.

sities of the freedmen, and in connection with this work considerable industrial training was given in the sewing schools for women. Night schools were also provided in the cities for those who could not attend during the day.

Connected in a measure with the educational work for the freedmen were the orphan asylums, which soon became an urgent necessity. The mortality attendant upon the flight of thousands from slavery, the hardships and exposure to which the colored people were at one time subject, and the death of soldiers in the army, had caused many orphans to be left in the camps for the dependent, and in the cities. It became evident that special provision must be made for their care. The Freedmen's Department prepared a full plan for a large and well-equipped asylum adequate for the demands made upon us, but no single aid society felt itself able to undertake the support of a large institution, and combinations of different societies for this purpose proved equally impracticable. We had to content ourselves, therefore, with several small and insufficient asylums in the various cities. No one group of workers labored more faithfully and devotedly than the good men and women who undertook the management, and in a measure, the support, of these institutions. One of the earliest attempts to provide for the orphans in an asylum was made by Miss Eliza Mitchell. She was a woman whose long life was devoted to good works, and she was one of the first to hasten to the aid of the freedmen. In 1863 I sent her to President's Island, near Memphis, to teach and assist in the Freedmen's Camp at that point. On finding many homeless and orphan children, she secured a tent and established the children therein under

the immediate care of "Aunt Maria," a colored woman who devotedly looked after her charges for about two years. Later the superintendent on the Island gave the asylum the best house for the purpose within his control. The boys worked in the garden surrounding the house, raising abundant vegetables for the children, and the girls were trained in the work of the household and in sewing. Miss Mitchell retained the supervision over the fifty or more orphans which the institution could accommodate. She was one of the finest of the many fine women who worked among us.

Similar efforts were successfully carried out at Helena, where the work was inaugurated by the assistant superintendent, and continued with the help of General and Mrs. Buford and the Society of Friends, among whose representatives Elkanah Beard and his wife were especially brave and devoted in their labor for the freedmen. At Natchez an asylum was supported by the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission, while still another institution was organized at Vicksburg. In Memphis a particularly large and well-managed asylum was carried on by Mrs. S. A. Martha Canfield, where about one hundred children were cared for. Mrs. Canfield had come among us just after the battle of Shiloh, intending to see her husband, who was a lieutenant-colonel in one of the Ohio regiments. She left the river boat just in time to meet her husband's body as it was carried from that tragic field. Her courage and fortitude — characteristic of many brave women in that terrible struggle — were very wonderful. She returned to her two little boys, and having placed them at school and attended to her business affairs, she came again to the Valley and

devoted herself with the best of judgment and energy to relief work among the soldiers and freedmen. Secretary Stanton, a personal friend of hers, having heard of her husband's death, had sent her, unsolicited, a pass to the front as a nurse, and this, she always said, came to her as a godsend, inspiring her to supplement her husband's service to his country by her own. The education of the children in the orphan asylums was frequently carried on by resident teachers; sometimes the children were enrolled in the nearest "public schools."

In our efforts to provide educational facilities for those so long in want of them, the white refugees were kept in mind as far as circumstances would permit. At Natchez, Vicksburg, and Memphis, schools were established by missionaries, chaplains, or aid societies, and were visited and aided by our officers. The General Superintendent of Refugee and Colored Schools, Chaplain Joseph Warren, says in this connection: "This unfortunate class of people is so unsettled that any permanent plan for the instruction of the children of it is impracticable. They generally, of course, hope to be able to return to their homes before a long time passes. . . . The best we can do now for the children is to seize such fleeting opportunities as may be found to awaken a desire for education, and to continue the process of instruction."

Owing to the fact that not all teachers co-operated with complete friendliness in the supervision of the Freedmen's Department over their work—though all claimed the benefits of its protection, and, in a measure, of its support—it was difficult to get statistics that were absolutely reliable. It may be said, however, with perfect assurance, that with

the close of the year 1864 thousands had become able to read the simpler school-books, while hundreds were able to read well. Many learned to write, and began the study of arithmetic and geography. In a letter, already referred to, written to Mr. Levi Coffin on July 5, 1864, I was able to report that during the preceding year no less than 13,320 Negroes had been under instruction. Of these about 4000 had learned to read quite fairly, and about 2000 to write. A year later these figures were greatly increased. The report from the colored schools under my jurisdiction for the quarter ending March 31, 1865, shows that in the following cities, towns, and camps,—that is, Memphis, Vicksburg, Natchez, Helena, Vidalia, Little Rock, Pine Bluff, President's Island, Davis Bend, and camps around Vicksburg, there was a total of 51 schools, 105 teachers, an enrolment of 7360 pupils, and an average attendance of 4667. This excludes the city of Columbus, from which place the report was evidently delayed, and a number of smaller points. Irregular, cramped, partial, and necessarily rudimentary as was the best education we could give them, it unfitted these men, women, and children whom the Nation had freed for being chattels. They were no longer creatures whom it would be safe to re-enslave. No one realized this fact better than some of the ex-slaves' former masters, and no one was more bitter in denunciation against the measures we inaugurated,—unless, indeed, it was the poorest and most illiterate among the whites, who for years had hampered the progress of the South by their ignorance and fanaticism. There were honorable exceptions, however, among Southern men of judgment and humanity who foresaw, not without relief, the passing of the old system,

and who felt, in their best moments, that no price was too great to have paid for redemption from that. To encourage these men in their efforts at readjustment was not the least important or valuable work of the Freedmen's Department or of its successor, the Freedmen's Bureau. The systems of education and industry devised for the Negro were of the utmost value here, for nothing so completely demonstrated the ideal of free labor and of ultimately equal rights and opportunities for all. I can do no better than quote at this point the statements made by Dr. Mayo in that report of the Bureau of Education already referred to. Dr. Mayo says:

"This campaign of education for the most needy and neglected 6,000,000 of the American people, from 1861 during succeeding years, closed by the incorporation in the revised constitution of every reconstructed Southern State of a provision for the establishment of the American school, under the protection of the military power of the General Government which was an imperative necessity. It is doubtful if this purpose could have been achieved otherwise, and without the establishment and the vigorous support of the common school for all classes and both races, the union between the reconstructed States and the Republic would have been far more a matter of after-dinner oratory and a periodical interchange of 'distinguished consideration' than that living and working together of all States and sections under the inspiration of common ideas and patriotic aspirations which is the only assurance of permanent republican nationality. . . .

"The war period, from 1861 to 1867-1869, can be regarded as a sort of rehearsal for the grand experiment of offering to the 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 freedmen in the South the complete system of elementary education as then developed in the United States, to the extent to which the people of these States were competent to accept, and anybody was able and willing to support it. Indeed, the great experiment from Washington to New Orleans practically

included every variety of schooling then in vogue in the country. First came the movement by private charity. Following this came the churches and philanthropic associations for the schooling of contrabands in camps and barracks; even on the field of battle during an engagement the colored soldiers clutched the spelling-book in one hand while they grasped the musket with the other. On this was laid the extended system of church denominational and private schools, not only for the elementary but the secondary and higher normal and industrial education that has become so prominent a factor in all the Southern States, and without which the common schools, the churches, and society of the colored race in general, would have been deprived for an entire generation of its most valuable leadership in all departments of its new life. With this has come up a great and beneficent movement for the reformation of the church, school, and society among the negroes, in the general improvement of their condition, and the development of the professional class of teachers, clergymen, physicians, and leaders in their new industrial life.

“But far more important and vital than this, indeed, the movement to which all that has been done by the North and the Nation has been tributary, was the founding, first in an indirect, and finally in a direct way, of a complete system of schools under the protection and by the support of the military arm of the Government of the United States. Through Gen. Rufus Saxton, in the Department of the South, Gen. John Eaton, jr., in the Valley of the Mississippi, and by Gen. N. P. Banks, in Louisiana, this original effort was developed into a veritable public school system of the national type, before the establishment of the Freedmen’s Bureau. That amid the tumults of war, and its terrible excitements, and an almost incredible experimenting with the emancipated class, and with so little money available for the support of the movement, so much could have been accomplished is one of the many wonders of our American history. Nevertheless, it was done, and so well done, that within ten years from the beginning of the free elementary schooling the experiment had evolved into the establishment of the complete American common school system, including the children of the schools of twenty years before.”

Before turning from the subject of the Freedmen's Department, it may be worth while to present a brief summary of the characteristics of the Negro as they were revealed to my officers, and to mention at the same time certain general conditions of our work to which no reference has as yet been made.

One fact in connection with the Negro must ever be borne in mind. The testimony alike of my officers and of the visitors to the Valley is all but unanimously to the effect that in spite of the suffering to which the freedmen were subjected in their desperate passage from slavery to freedom,—suffering which in many cases must have far exceeded that which they had experienced in bondage,—scarcely a single instance could be quoted in which a Negro voluntarily returned as a slave to his master.¹ Discouraged, panic-stricken, suspicious they were; but ready to exchange their hard-won and unhappy freedom for the sometimes easier conditions of slavery, they were not. It was their terror of finding themselves tricked into some form of bondage that constituted one of our greatest difficulties in persuading the refugees to return to their old masters, or to the representatives of the master class, and labor for them on a wage basis. This factor came out very strongly in the early application of the lessee system. It is right that it should be plainly stated after the passage of many years, when prejudice and ill-feeling have in part died out, because in so far as the black man suffered from the degra-

¹ Among others, Samuel R. Shipley of Philadelphia, bears witness specifically to the truth of this statement. As president of the executive board of the Friends' Association of Philadelphia, he made a tour of freedmen's camps along the Mississippi and returned to his society a very fair-minded and interesting report (1864).

dation of his lot as *slave*, — apart from the weariness and pain of body he may have endured, — in so far as he yearned for freedom, in just so far did he personally justify the struggle which freed him; and in just so far is he entitled to his manhood.

That the Negro was stirred with an immediate impulse to profit by his new opportunities is amply proved by the passion for education which was exhibited by old and young. It is true that, to the Negro, one form of book-learning was as good as another. Any one devoted to his books was on the road to freedom; any one ignorant of books was on his way back to slavery. But even this crude notion brought thousands of Negroes into line with those who have turned their backs forever on dumb ignorance and who face the opportunities and responsibilities of literate men and women. Dr. Warren, in a report to my office dated April 10, 1865, remarks upon this as follows:

“One of the most gratifying facts developed by the recent change in their condition is, that they very generally desire instruction, and many seize every opportunity in intervals of labor to obtain it. I saw a small detachment of infantry soldiers, who had previously been unable to secure any attention from a teacher, placed within reach of a mission family. The soldiers had not been there an hour when those not on sentry duty had, of their own motion, procured spelling-books, and begged one of the ladies to aid them occasionally; they soon were busily at work on the alphabet. Similar things occur everywhere, proving the general desire, of which I have spoken. . . . They who are regularly at work, or engaged in business, in many cases study desultorily. They get a little aid now and then from others. I find that in colored regiments the men often find assistance from their comrades. A chaplain of one of these regiments, who has done very

much for his charge, tells me that they have done more for one another. . . . When we remember the circumstances of the colored people, we find the progress they are making to be gratifying and astonishing. Their unsettled condition, want of clothing, lack of parental discipline, ignorance of the locality of schools and the mode of obtaining admission, the temptations of new-found freedom, and the contemptuous opposition of all lovers of the old regime, are difficulties that would be seriously in the way of educating any class of people. Only an enthusiastic desire for improvement could lead any people to put forth the efforts which the freed people are making to procure instruction."

Such words as those from an honest, competent observer, reinforced as they are with much more evidence of the same sort, should prove strong enough to withstand the myth-making tendency which fastens all too readily upon facts like these, transforming them imperceptibly into legends and vagaries.

The adaptability of the Negro was a quality which stood him in good stead during the difficult time of which I write, and probably helped him more than any other single trait to enter the arena of business competition. Chaplain Fiske, in speaking of the black lessees, — Report of the General Superintendent of Freedmen, 1864, — says:

"Of the whole fifty-six of these small agriculturists there is not one, whom I have seen, who has not made enough to keep him comfortably alive through the winter; while most of them have gotten together teams and agricultural implements, and such sums of money as will start them upon the next year's work at great advantage. The most successful of all, this year, has been Robert Miner, opposite Milliken's Bend. He cultivated eighty acres in cotton, making forty bales of that valuable fibre, one-half bale to the acre, — the best crop I have seen in my whole tour. He also made forty acres of good corn."

Other Negro planters sold their crops, standing, for sums ranging from four to eight thousand dollars.

"Of the rest [continues Mr. Fiske], most sold their crops in the seed at from twenty-eight to thirty-three cents per pound, and have made, on ten acres, not far from an average of five hundred dollars, besides their support, and about the same proportionally on larger tracts. Many of them had funds from the industry of last year; some borrowed small sums, which, in every instance but one, so far as I could find, have been punctually repaid. I cannot see that in any particular these colored men have been less successful than the white planters alongside them."

Dr. Warren, — Report of April 10, 1865, — says in the same connection :

"And many of them, of all shades of color, show capacity for business, and conduct it successfully on principles of honor that would do credit to any men. If we take into view all their circumstances, and learn what proportion of them are really able to take respectable places in the business world, we shall cease to speak of the incapacity of the race, and express surprise that so many are found able to 'take care of themselves' without guardianship or tutelage. There are many at Memphis, Vicksburg, and Natchez, who carry on business as mechanics with success. We are acquainted with persons who purchased themselves and gained property before the rebellion; and, though obliged to have nominal owners in order to avoid expatriation, lived in credit and comfort. One family of such persons, not having children of their own, have brought up decently five orphan children, and helped them to start in the world. Two men whom I know carry on important blacksmith shops; others shoe shops, and the like, too numerous to mention. . . . There is no doubt but that, as their wants as communities arise, the men necessary to conduct their affairs will be found. It is the occasion that develops the man."

Of the Memphis region, where there were comparatively few plantation interests, Captain Walker, the efficient post

Superintendent, reported — April 30, 1865 — that a large number of colored people owning their own teams were making a very respectable living bringing in wood and garden produce.

These instances are noteworthy only because of the immensely difficult situation in which the Negroes were then involved, and also because we are apt to think of the ex-slave immediately after his emancipation as an utterly helpless being whose efforts in his own behalf were practically nil. There was, of course, another side to the picture, easily imagined from the description of wretchedness and suffering already given. Apart from the difficulty of inculcating habits of cleanliness, and obedience to the laws of hygiene, there were other and more serious evils to be overcome. The vice of licentiousness had taken deep root in the Negro character, and however much it may have been an original race characteristic, it had been nurtured in a terribly efficient school. The occasional efforts of humane and thoughtful slave owners to prevent and alleviate this vice could have availed but little against the accepted standards — or even the accidents — of the system itself. From the first the Freedmen's Department exerted itself to enforce and maintain the marriage relation by every means in its power, and in March, 1864, a special order was issued by General Thomas, according to the terms of which any ordained minister of the gospel accredited by the General Superintendent was authorized to perform the marriage ceremony among the freedmen. From that time on more systematic records were kept and filed with the post superintendents. The returns at the Vicksburg post were particularly full, and taking that as an example, we

found that among the fifteen hundred marriages solemnized in that district up to November 30, 1864, — eight months after the order was circulated, — one-sixth of the contracting parties — or to put it more clearly, five hundred and sixty-seven out of the three thousand persons — had previously been forcibly and hopelessly separated from husband or wife by the direct operation of the system of slavery; — some for the personal convenience of master or overseer; some because the master would have all his people “mated” on his own plantation, or not at all; but most of them by sale or removal. The testimony in our hands concerning the corruption which was then countenanced and sometimes enforced was overwhelming.¹ It was to teach and reform a people inured to these practices that the institution of lawful marriage was directed, and great and encouraging progress certainly was made. Chaplain Warren was able to report that among the Negroes so married the connection was not treated lightly, and that in only a few cases was the relation broken up by fickleness and inconstancy. Against the few cases of faithlessness it was then possible to marshal “hundreds of cases of innocent and happy conjugal life.” It is unfortunately true that there has been a reaction among the Negroes against this first realization of whatever aspirations they had possessed

¹ As illustrative of this subject, it may be stated that Major Sargent, in an appendix to a report on his District in Arkansas, gives extracts from the order book of a Mr. C., a planter in that State. The book contains instructions to his overseer, and was found in his house, which he had abandoned on the approach of our forces. One extract is as follows: “The plantation is to produce 400 bales of cotton, 40,000 lbs. of pork, 50 stacks of oats, 75 stacks fodder, 8 stacks millet, ten Negro Children.” He then arranges for producing the children by ordering the pairing of “Henry and Susan, Cambridge and Matilda, Sandy and Yellow Kitty,” etc.

toward chastity and dignity in the family relation, but there is to-day so strong a tendency to notice and condemn those who fail, and to overlook those who are worthy, that it is but just to submit the testimony of my officers and myself for what it is worth. The Negro can never really be estimated or understood until all the elements of his history are taken into consideration.¹

I think the statement may safely be made that no single group of men ever observed the Negro under more discouraging circumstances than did my assistants in the Mississippi Valley. To them was revealed the Nation's freedman in all his ignorance, destitution, bewilderment, immorality, and emotional extravagance. The men who thus observed him had been chosen for their ability to comprehend large issues and enforce adequate means of achieving large results. It is not claimed that they

¹ In this connection Edgar Gardner Murphy remarks: "The only adequate measure of social efficiency and the only ultimate test of essential race progress lies in the capacity to create the home; and it is in the successful achievement of the idea of the institution of the family . . . that we are to seek the real criterion of negro progress.

"For the very reason that the test is so severe — and yet so instinctively American — the weaknesses of the race will seem conspicuous and formidable. . . . The heritage of the negro — his heritage from slavery and from the darker age which preceded slavery — has given him but small equipment for the achievement of this task. And yet the negro home exists. That its existence is, in many cases, but a naïve pretence . . . is evident enough. And yet those who would observe broadly and closely will find a patiently and persistently increasing number of true families and real homes, a number far in excess of the popular estimate. . . . Scores of such homes, in some cases hundreds, exist in numbers of our American communities. . . . But one of the tragic elements of our situation lies in the fact that of this most honorable and most hopeful aspect of negro life the white community, North or South, knows practically nothing . . . of the constructive factors of negro progress — the negro school, the saner negro church, the negro home — the white community is in ignorance." *The Present South*, pp. 166-167.

were always successful—no human agency could have met and mastered the situation that confronted us—but they were devoted workers, intelligent, moderate in judgment, and courageous in the execution of what they deemed right. The testimony of these men should be considered in all estimates of the Negro's character and achievement. With full recognition of his shiftlessness, and the unsatisfactory condition of his industrial and family relations, the faith of the men who labored among the freedmen never wavered in its insistence upon the capacity of these people to develop themselves, as a race, into the self-supporting, self-respecting, and moral type of human being. This faith was based upon the large number of men and women who had already attained such a standard, and also upon the evidences of improvement in the general mass. A careful study of my reports for 1864 and 1865 would make it clear that the hopeful attitude of the officers of the Freedmen's Department was grounded not upon ignorance or sentimental theories, but upon an open-eyed and courageous acknowledgment of the facts as they were. A statement made by Dr. Warren with especial reference to the freedman in his business relations, if understood to apply to the future of the Negro generally, gives a fair impression of the feeling of the superintendents toward the people under their charge. I quote again from Dr. Warren's Report of April 10, 1865:

"I hardly know how to convey a proper notion of the effect produced in them by their coming to something like the responsibilities of manhood. They feel them; and yet they have been so long cared for that they are astonished at their own

capacity. They become ambitious in speech; and their high-sounding phrases are in strange contrast with their rustic and imperfect dialect. Their courtliness and gravity of manner are oddly mixed up with childishness. The spectacle they present excites fear and hope, laughter and tears in succession. On the whole, hope predominates. They will make mistakes; and they will learn caution and shrewdness by them. They who were cheated and abused last year will hardly be so this year. They who make contracts desire to learn to read them. They who have once been cheated in changing money desire to be able to calculate. We can see the wants, desires, and hopes of civilized life struggling within them. In some these feelings are well formed; in others dim and uncertain."

Viewed broadly, the history of the Negro from that day to this has been to a somewhat remarkable extent what my officers, from the data before them, felt it must be. There have been legislative errors which have been productive of untold evil in both races. There has been displayed by the Negro himself a spirit of trifling with great opportunities; while those who have opposed or supported him have not done so without betraying both prejudice and sentimentality. But notwithstanding this, and the fearful difficulties which the colored race has had to surmount, it has continued to produce more and more remarkable instances of honest achievement among noteworthy individuals, together with a general uplift of the race itself. On the basis of that record we can afford to be hopeful and even confident.

Turning now from the freedmen of the Mississippi region to certain aspects of the work of the Department which cared for them, there is a group of facts which must be considered in any effort to test the value of that work.

In the first place, the number of Negroes under our supervision was appalling. General Banks reported 150,000 within his jurisdiction in the Department of the Gulf.¹ General Saxton was confronted with some 82,000 after the arrival of the hordes that had followed Sherman in his march to the sea. Previous to that it was probable that he had not dealt with many more than one-fourth that number.² In the year 1863 to 1864 our Department had cared specifically for no less than 113,650 Negroes whose records appeared upon our books, — exclusive of the white refugees who came within our jurisdiction. The territory over which our supervision extended was populated, it will be remembered, according to the census of 1860, by 770,000 blacks, and while many of these had been dislodged by the breaking out of hostilities, an immense population was left with which our Department was called upon to deal more or less directly. The extent of territory, too, which our operations covered, and which included western Kentucky and Tennessee, together with Mississippi, Arkansas, and part of Louisiana, was very large, and this fact in itself was one of the most difficult with which we had to deal. The hordes that swept down upon our armies in the Mississippi Valley were to all intents and purposes barbarians, and while the same was probably true of the Negroes on the coast of South Carolina, the multitude cared for by General Saxton was at first composed of men and women who, being left behind in the flight of their masters, remained among the scenes and on the lands to which they were

¹ A Chapter in Reconstruction, P. S. Peirce, p. 17.

² Mayo: in Report of Bureau of Education 1900-1901, pp. 418-424.

accustomed, while very many of those who in their bewilderment came to us for protection were from distant plantations, from which, in many cases, they had but just escaped. In both the Department of the Gulf and the Department of the Tennessee the situation was indescribably complicated by the presence of the slaves' former masters.¹

Finally, it should be remembered — especially in connection with all the industrial operations — that after the Negroes began to be enlisted into the United States service, the communities upon which we had to depend for our laboring force were composed largely of men deemed unfit for regular service, together with the women, the children, and those positively disabled. Even with this crippled body of workers, free labor could be compared not unfavorably with slave labor.

In view of the immense difficulty of the task which confronted my assistants and the all but unlimited number of instances in which their efforts ameliorated suffering and injustice or prevented these outright, it seems scarcely worth while to enter upon a defence of our procedures. Yet it is largely the spirit of criticism which has survived in men's minds, and which, with some notable exceptions, has incorporated itself permanently in the literature of the subject, — bare and unsatisfactory as that literature is. It seems to me, as I review the question, that the most important criticism aimed against our principles and methods was that which attacked the economic bases of our operations. That men and women should suffer from injustice, destitution and disease in more appalling num-

¹ McKaye, *Emancipated Slave Face to Face with his old Master*.

bers and intensity than should prevail in any society righteously organized and at peace within itself, was unavoidable in a population undisciplined, shifting, and caught in the maelstrom of war; but, that the measures formulated for its relief should be fundamentally erroneous in principle and oppressive in application, — that is an indictment which must be inferred from some of the semi-official reports made at the time upon our work, and one which may not be passed in silence.

Aside from the immediate calls upon our humanity made by all the various forms of suffering, disease, and death, the problem which we were called upon to meet brought us face to face with an industrial world in chaos, and its elements in conflict with each other, — a small world, relatively, but large enough to tax all our energies and drain our resources. To evoke from this chaos conditions in which *the whole mass* might promptly live and labor with some assurance of justice and security, demanded, certainly, a definite system regulating industrial relations, and a vehicle of organization by which that system could be enforced. This in itself involved a type of paternalism hateful alike to the radical emancipationists of the North and to the ex-slaveholder of the Mississippi Valley. The Government was obviously the only employer upon whom the freedman could rely, and even the Government, in the early days of my superintendency, had given no intimation of its willingness to feed and clothe the destitute beyond employing those for whom it had need in connection with the military operations and the cotton industry. Grant himself had no authority beyond this for the issue of rations and clothing to relieve

immediate distress, and in issuing such supplies he took enormous financial and official risks upon himself at a time when his own position was by no means secure. Government employment insured the contraband — later the freedman — no more than a bare livelihood for himself and his family. Undoubtedly there were men and women whose labor adequately rewarded in the open market might easily have won for them many times the wages offered by the Government. But the problem before us at first, let me repeat, was to afford not the best wages to the individual which free competition in an open market might assure him, but a livelihood for the entire population under a condition of military and industrial disorder which temporarily necessitated some form of definite regulation and precluded unrestricted competition. That the freedmen suffered in many ways under the regulations imposed was inevitable; that they suffered more than they would had they been left to make their own contracts with their former masters or with the Northern speculator seems incredible indeed. Moreover, no order regulating wages was ever issued except to regulate the minimum rate of payment. The laborer was free to make better terms if he could, and when competent, he was in every way encouraged so to do. Evidence might be quoted from my report to prove that the normal conditions of competitive labor did indeed exist save where the catastrophes of war or the collision of authority disturbed the elements with which we had to deal. In a report to my office, on freedmen in Arkansas, for instance (1864), occurs the following statement: "During the cotton-picking season nearly all were paid by the pound,

and earned from one to seven dollars per day. Many have been allowed a third or one half of the crops, and have realized, though the season was poor, handsome profits. Among them are not a few of remarkable judgment and force of character who have been engaged at their own prices as foremen. The earnings of those in cities have largely exceeded those on plantations." The report goes on to say that the *usual* wage has been the minimum in order (as regulated by Orders No. 9 issued by Adjutant-General Thomas), — a rate which proved unnecessarily low in communities of comparative prosperity. Industrial and social conditions throughout our territory improved steadily and normally, so that visitors to the Valley in 1865 reported a far better state of affairs among the freedmen. In Arkansas, for instance, Superintendent Sargent reported, — March 31, 1865, — that "more than two thousand are at work on plantations, where the minimum rate of wages is twenty-five dollars per month for the able-bodied male hands, including healthy rations, quarters, and medical attendance."

Upon the whole, the experiment on behalf of the freedmen in the Mississippi Valley, in spite of the many failures to attain the ends we had before us, cannot be lightly overlooked in any summary which history may attempt of the relations between the Nation and the Negro.

CHAPTER XV

Third visit to Washington. Legislation concerning the Freedmen's Bureau. Chaplain Fiske's mission. Mr. Sumner's heroic convictions. "Memoranda concerning Freedmen's Bureau," — a political leaflet. Last interview with President Lincoln. The news of his assassination reaches Memphis.

IT is my purpose to recount briefly in this chapter the share taken by the Freedmen's Department in that popular and legislative discussion of the relation of the country to the Negro which resulted in the establishment of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.

It was the far-sighted abolitionists of the Boston clique, the philanthropists who had banded themselves into the various aid associations all over the country, — prominent among whom were the Quakers, — the members of the Commission appointed by Mr. Lincoln for the consideration of the subject, together with those of us in the army having practical experience in dealing with Negro affairs, who first realized the necessity of some central agency devoted to the interests of the freed people, — or, to speak more justly, devoted to maintaining an equable relation between the interests of the freed people and the interests of the communities in which they found themselves. As early as January, 1863, the agitation in these various circles had so far made itself felt in Congress that Mr. Wilson of Massachusetts presented to the Senate a petition of the

Emancipation League for the formation of a Bureau of Emancipation, and during the same month a bill for the establishment, within the War Department, of a Bureau for the control of freedmen's affairs, was presented for the first time to the House by Mr. T. D. Eliot.¹ A hard fight resulted, and on March 1, 1864, the bill passed the House with a majority of only two votes. On being referred in the Senate to the Committee on Slavery and Freedom, Mr. Sumner, the chairman of that committee, took the matter in hand. Under his leadership the bill was so altered as to remove the affairs of freedmen from under the jurisdiction of the War Department and place them wholly in charge of the Treasury. Mr. Sumner had become sincerely convinced of the righteousness of this change, and having once taken his stand in the matter he defended it with all his accustomed vigor. There were others, however, both in and out of Congress who saw the question from a different point of view, and Mr. Sumner's measure met with a great deal of opposition. In order to make sure that conditions in the Mississippi Valley should be fairly represented to Congress and to the country at large, we despatched Chaplain Asa S. Fiske, to whom reference has already been made in previous chapters, to interview Mr. Sumner and conduct as it were a propaganda in the interests of freedmen's affairs.² He went directly to Senator Sumner and

¹ For a careful statement of the debates in connection with this early effort to legislate on the subject, see *The Freedmen's Bureau, A Chapter in Reconstruction* by Paul Skeels Peirce, Chapter II; O. O. Howard, *Autobiography*, Part III, *Reconstruction*, Chap. XLVII. See also *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st and 2d Sessions.

² Chaplain Fiske had already proved himself one of our most devoted and capable assistants in the Valley. In August, 1863, he had been detailed by General Grant to the special service of representing the needs of the suffer-

presented to him the complications that had already resulted from Treasury control of affairs in the Valley, and the practical difficulties which that Department, in the nature of things, must encounter. Dr. Fiske's report of that meeting throws an amusing side-light upon what we already know of the great Senator's really magnificent confidence in the sufficiency of the point of view he had made his own. He listened impassively to Dr. Fiske's story, and at its conclusion swept a majestic circle with his

ing refugees to the philanthropists of the North, and had fulfilled this mission with wonderful success. Dr. Fiske tells a story which illustrates the splendid response which was made by Northern benevolence to our needs. "In October," says Dr. Fiske, "I reached Philadelphia, — having previously visited St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Columbus, and Cincinnati, — and there the Secretary and Treasurer of the American Missionary Association, Dr. Strieby, entered into co-operation with me. He introduced me first to a venerable Quaker merchant, who heard my story and gravely remarked at its conclusion, 'Friend Asa, thee has a good cause, and friend Grant is a good man. I will help thee,' and turning in his swivel chair to his desk, he wrote a check for five thousand dollars. This he handed to me, saying, 'Thy mission, friend, requires haste; I will introduce thee to my neighbor.' Whereupon he took me to a co-religionist, saying, 'Our friend hath a good cause. I have helped him a little. Hear him.' The neighbor heard, and presently turned in his swivel chair to his desk and wrote a check for two thousand five hundred dollars. The first twenty minutes of effort in the City of Brotherly Love had netted \$7,500. We next arranged for a mass meeting in the most popular hall in the city. Reverend Phillips Brooks spoke after I had presented the situation, and as a result of that meeting, \$75,000 worth of clothing, for which the materials had been bought and made up by the efforts of citizens, was on its way to the destitute of the Valley. Similar meetings were held with like success at Cooper Union, in New York City, in Brooklyn, New Haven, Springfield, Worcester, Boston, Providence, and I think Portland. On my return — always with the assistance of the Secretary and Treasurer of the A. M. A. — I met the people of Troy, Albany, Schenectady, Utica, Syracuse, Auburn, Rochester, Lockport, and Buffalo, where I became satisfied that ample relief had been assured, and, closing my mission, returned to the South. As a matter of fact there went down the river as the fruits of that campaign not less than three quarters of a million dollars' worth of new clothing for distribution by Superintendent Eaton among those who were perishing for the lack."

hand. "You gentlemen," said he, "are away off there on a little section of the perimeter of the wheel. I am here at the centre, sir, and sweep the whole circumference." Later, in 1865, when the discussion between the two houses was at its height, Mr. Sumner signified that he would be glad to talk with me on the subject of the bill that was pending. Chaplain Fiske at once telegraphed me to come to Washington, and on my arrival escorted me to the Senator. I presented the matter as best I could, but evidently he was not impressed by my story either, for he greeted it with almost identical disdain. So urgent did the matter become that Dr. Fiske devoted himself to a serious propaganda, besieging the great dailies of the Northern cities with statements calculated to arouse an appreciation of the true state of affairs. The press was very liberal in making room for these communications, and so much were they instrumental in forming public opinion that Mr. Sumner himself took occasion to call Dr. Fiske to account for his labors.

When the bill as shaped by the Committee on Slavery and Freedom again reached the House, that body declined to accept it in the form in which it was returned to them, and a committee of conference was agreed upon, Sumner acting as manager for the Senate. As a result of the conference a Bureau of Freedmen and Abandoned Lands was recommended which should practically constitute a separate Department of Government, controlling the lands and property interests which had been under the Treasury, and reporting neither to the Treasury nor to the War Department, but directly to the President, from whose appointment the Commissioner of the Bureau should derive his

power. The bill, however, did not pass the Senate, and a second committee of conference was requested. Mr. Wilson of Massachusetts, who from the first had been in favor of making the Bureau an adjunct of the War Department, now became, as chairman of the Military Committee, the chief promoter of the new bill on behalf of the Senate,—thus replacing Mr. Sumner. This measure was hurried through both Houses near the close of the session, and received the signature of the President March 3, 1865. The question had been buffeted back and forth between the House and the Senate for over two years, and its final settlement was a relief, probably, even to those who had opposed the measure. It cannot be maintained that the bill in the form in which it finally became a law was a brilliant legislative achievement. It was at best but a makeshift. As such it put an end to the controversy as to which branch of the Government should control the affairs of freedmen, and, shorn as it was of all detail, it was probably the only measure upon which Congress could have been induced to agree. The arguments in favor of making the Bureau fall within the jurisdiction of the War Department in preference to either the Treasury or the Department of the Interior are fairly well presented in the following document, which we prepared and circulated freely among Congressmen and others:

MEMORANDA CONCERNING FREEDMEN'S BUREAU

The wisdom of organizing a Bureau of Freedmen's Affairs seems generally conceded. The question is whether it shall be a Military Bureau in the War Office, or some civil organization. Will gentlemen interested in this important matter consider the following proposition:

1st. The War Department has POWER, in districts wrested from the insurrection, power for protection, direction, control of the persons and interests of the Freedmen. A system of civil agencies has none, in the very nature of the case.

2d. The War Department has INSTRUMENTALITIES, viz: recognized laws, courts, systems of supply—in all of which essential points any other agency is entirely wanting.

3d. The War Department alone can root out utterly the old codes and statutes of injustice against the black, which are likely to revive, and compel such codes of practice at least as will assure him justice and the protection of his rights. Such civil processes as now exist are the remnants of the slave code and cannot be trusted.

4th. When reconstruction is thorough and complete, on a loyal and free basis, and the black man is assured his rights as free, then we want no further special oversight for him. Just then the War Department will naturally withdraw its power, leaving the freedman a free man, with no invidious distinction between him and the white. Just then, when it has ceased to be needed, the efficiency of the civil agency would begin. All that is needed is to provide for such supervision as he requires *during the war*. More than that would be a curse.

5th. The War Department is separated from trade, speculation, property, and plantation interests, and disloyal traffic—the chief instruments of corruption—by most stringent laws and most severe penalties, every sentiment of patriotism, and every instinct of military honor, and by the full recognition of the military disgraces and disasters these interests have brought upon us; while these matters are legitimately in the hands—nay, are even a chief concern of either of the civil agencies proposed.

6th. To legislate Freedmen's affairs into the War Department is to do all legislation can to place the nation's Freedman where his interest, separated from every other, can be represented. To legislate him into other hands *for the reason that the plantations are there*¹—which is the reason urged—is simply to legislate the plantation into supremacy over the race, which is crime.

¹ This was the basis of Mr. Sumner's advocacy of Treasury control.

7th. Defendants of the proposition of civil supervision of their affairs argue that two controls of the two interests — plantation and men — will render conflict probable. This apprehension must arise from the conviction that interests of the plantation and those of the man may be opposite, as they plainly may be. This apprehension, then, is peremptory reason for placing the interests of the Freedmen in hands entirely clear of the property concern, and not reason for avoiding conflict, by legislating the man underneath the plantation.

8th. Civil agents have a nominal control in these affairs, yet are powerless, and are compelled, for efficiency, to appeal at every step to independent military authorities ; such a policy will assure fatal and continual collisions, bitterness, and failure.

9th. In so far as plantations have influenced the policy pursued toward the black hitherto, that influence has been disaster to him and disgrace to the nation. The plantation scheme, however, is even now being resumed by the civil agents who control affairs under the unfortunate legislation of last session, — legislation which by an obscure clause in a bill regulating trade and abandoned property settled into the hands of trade and property agents control of the destinies of the nation's Freedmen !

10th. These civil agents are even now making common cause with every corrupt, speculative, disloyal influence against incorruptible commanders and every purely military measure in most important sections of our military operations. By every one of these influences the civil control of Freedmen is pressed, as even a prime point, in their contest with the military authority.

11th. The War Department has, without legislative sanction, on its own responsibility, organized and done all that has been done in the way of governmental care and control of the affairs of these people. Large classes of officers, against obloquy and opposition, have undertaken and suffered for them. As a whole, the army and its officers were the first to recognize and applaud the right and policy of emancipation. Cruel exceptions have indeed existed. Military officers, under the pressure of military duties, have not always been able to give attention to the organization of measures for the relief and employment of the blacks. Yet the most nu-

merous, worthy, and notable examples of effort on their behalf are found among military men. There is no shadow of foundation for the supposition that military officers, appointed and commissioned in a military Bureau for fitness, and held responsible to its head for the discharge of their duties, will be either heartless, cruel, or incompetent, while they will have power for the exercise of their functions.

Mr. Sumner, although he arrayed himself, in my judgment, on the side least likely to effect legislation beneficial to the blacks, was as courageous as ever in maintaining his stand for what he believed to be right. The presence of two separate agencies in the field filled him with apprehension and disturbed as well his academic sense of fitness. In spite of that, however, he proved that his desire for the welfare of the freedmen far outweighed any theories he may have formed as to the means to be pursued. When his bill placing the Freedmen's Bureau under the Treasury Department was defeated, he threw himself with equal vigor into the support of a measure creating practically an independent Department; when Congress deemed that measure impracticable, and Mr. Wilson had succeeded him in the management of a new bill, he allied himself with Mr. Wilson in the effort to bring to a vote a measure which was diametrically opposed to the principle for which he had fought. Few laws fathered by Mr. Sumner stand to-day upon our statute books, — though no man was more indefatigable than he in presenting measures, — but his influence among our legislators and upon the country generally was very great. Whatever his faults, the power of his uprightness and idealism in shaping events and raising the standards of men's conceptions and conduct

is not to be measured save by instruments of greater subtlety than laws and statutes.

Mr. Wilson was a legislator of quite a different type. He had a wonderful faculty for sensing the feeling of the Nation and expressing it in measures which the Nation's law-makers approved.

Still another vigorous champion of freedmen's affairs, who was in complete sympathy with our efforts to keep the proposed Bureau in the War Department, was Senator Collamore of Vermont, at one time our Postmaster-General, and a very able man. I remember saying to him one day, "Mr. Senator, when in Toledo I used to tell a story about you to the children in the schools there, and I should like to know whether or not I told the facts correctly." The Senator good-naturedly agreed to listen to the story, and I repeated it to him as follows: "Your family, I am told, lived not far from the college where you entered as a student. You had a comfortable home, but various little economies had to be practised, and with those in view you began coming barefoot to college exercises. It was not long before one of the professors privately remonstrated with you, saying that it was hardly becoming in a college student to come to the institution barefooted, and asking you if you could not procure shoes. After that you always appeared at college with your feet well shod. But it was observed that you carried the shoes under your arm from your home to the border of the campus, also that you carried your shoes under your arm from the border of the campus to your home!" At this Mr. Collamore smiled broadly and remarked, "You can safely tell that story just as you have it, Colonel Eaton."

My time in Washington had been occupied chiefly in calling upon Senators and Congressmen, but I had had

*Allow Col. Eaton
to pass to Gen. Grant's
Head Quarters & return*

Jan, 16, 1865, Lincoln

several interviews with Mr. Lincoln, through whose kindness I had also been enabled to see General Grant. So great was the President's conscientiousness that he would not at that time

express any positive opinion as to which Department the Freedmen's Bureau should be made responsible, lest his judgment should unduly influence the debate then in progress. Before the legislation regarding the Bureau had reached a satisfactory conclusion, I felt that I could no longer stay away from my work in the Mississippi Valley. I therefore called on Mr. Lincoln to bid him good-by,—in how final a sense I had indeed no premonition. He was thinner than ever, and his face was drawn and sad, bearing the marks of suffering and deep thought. He referred to his re-election, expressing a sense of gratitude, but with great solemnity and sadness. The iron of the terrible experience of the war had entered his heart more and more deeply. He felt evident assurance of early peace, but perplexity in regard to its details. His heart was bearing the anxieties of the entire people,—North and South,—and under the pressure of the National sorrow his dignity and compassion were greater even than ever before. I had never seen him when his manner was marked with such great tenderness. He was like a man seeing visions, and even the "little stories" of

Col Eaton:

You will continue your supervision of Indian over the some territory for the same principles as in the past; making such improvements as experiments may suggest, until legislation shall regulate some further change

A. Lincoln

Feb. 10. 1865

FACSIMILE OF ORDER SIGNED BY PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

which he was always reminded, and the jokes in which he took such quaint enjoyment and consolation, had assumed a melancholy tone.

Because of the uncertainty as to what Congress would do and the impossibility of outlining any definite program for the conduct of affairs in the Valley, I asked Mr. Lincoln if he would give me a word over his own signature to strengthen me against the difficulties I felt might still be encountered. To this he agreed very heartily, and asked me to write out an order which I deemed would be most useful for my purposes. I wrote the following informal order, summarizing the verbal instructions he had already given me, and this he promptly signed:

COL. EATON, — You will continue your supervision of the Freedmen over the same territory and on the same principles as in the past, making such improvements as experience may suggest, until legislation shall require some further change.

A. LINCOLN.

Feb. 10, 1865.

Then I bade Mr. Lincoln good-by, little knowing what was so soon to follow, but grateful indeed to him for the indorsement he had given my work.

My headquarters at this time were in Memphis, and to that point I returned after my visit to Washington. The city was full of rebel sympathizers, and the situation of those officers whose duties conflicted with the inclinations of the citizens was not by any means either safe or enviable. In one sense, Memphis was restored to comparative prosperity after the war on account of the many Confederates who had stayed there during the conflict and who still remained, making money out of the opportunities

which the war offered in that region. But for the same reason the post, to a Union officer, was one of real danger and difficulty. My own duties — and indeed those of all of my officers — were particularly obnoxious to a large number of people, and my friends felt a good deal of anxiety on my account. On the whole, considering the circumstances, we were fortunate in rousing but few personal enmities; there were some, however, whose hatred of us and of our work was implacable. My wife and I roomed with a Union family in a large house which also sheltered most of the members of my local staff. I used to go each day to my office, some distance away, and it was my custom, naturally, to keep somewhat regular hours. On returning home one night just at dusk, I reached a part of the street where there were few or no houses, and was approaching my lodgings when I stumbled over a man lying prone on the pavement. Examination showed that he had been wounded in the head by a bullet, and to my horror I soon realized that the shot had killed him. We were never able to discover any trace of the murderer. The man had been many times mistaken for me, and because of this undoubted likeness and in default of any reasonable theory to account for his death, it was supposed that he had been shot by some one who intended to have made away with me. Those were rough times when a man might meet a violent death and few would concern themselves about it.

I had not been long in Memphis when Congress adjourned, having passed, as already noted, the bill enacting the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. The following month came the news of Lee's surrender, and the North was filled with acclamations of

joy, in which at least the soldiers of the lost cause were able in a measure to join. Even the tragedy of a present and certain failure, together with the terror of an uncertain future, could not wholly repress a kind of relief felt by the South in the termination of the struggle. Now perhaps more than ever before would the peculiar qualities of Mr. Lincoln's greatness have been felt. He would have been for the whole country — North and South alike — an incarnation of its own love, wisdom, and strength; while lacking the visible symbol of those qualities, all the baser passions in the Nation might be expected to assert themselves. The joy of the country in the restoration of peace was of short duration. Early one morning — it was Sunday, I remember — an officer of the revenue, a Mr. Cooper, who had a room next to mine, and who was an early riser, rapped vigorously on my door, shouting, "The President is dead!" He had no evidence of the fact save that he had heard it in the air, and I was so unbelieving that he hurried down to the wharf for news. He soon returned with a printed slip brought down by the last boat announcing the assassination of Mr. Lincoln. The mingled feeling of horror, surprise, and grief that spread over the country no one can attempt to describe. In disloyal cities occupied by our soldiers the condition was intensified by a vague unreasoning belief, entertained by many, that the Confederacy was in some way responsible. Added to that — at least in the territory all about me — was the despairing grief of the Negroes and their pitiable uncertainty as to what was to become of them. While the shock was at its height, it took a strong hand to keep individual soldiers under control; here and there one would declare his readiness to avenge the President's

death, and if a Confederate sympathizer expressed any other feeling than one of sadness and regret, he did so at his peril. The day had advanced but little when word came from the Commanding General that he was in receipt of messages from many families who were in terror lest the Negroes should rise up and assassinate those who had been known to sympathize with the South. It was Sunday, as I have said, and I had not made my usual rounds, but I replied that I was sure nothing of the kind would occur. Again he sent me a similar message, and again I made a similar reply. Soon after came a third message stating that the people were terrorized, and if any massacre should occur, I would be held responsible. I mounted my horse and made my way as quietly as possible to a Negro church where the colored people were allowed to assemble freely. Dismounting and entering, what a sight met me as I halted on the threshold! The congregation — easily stirred at all times — had concentrated itself into little groups of men, women, and children, each group the centre of a whirlwind of emotion. So absorbed were they in their grief that I passed up one aisle and down another before any one recognized me. But there was mingled with their shouts, ejaculations, prayers for protection, and inarticulate cries of woe, not one word of vengeance toward those who had held them in bondage. I passed out of the church and went to the streets most exclusively inhabited by the colored people, hoping to again observe them before they should recognize me, but I had barely entered the quarter before they swarmed from their houses, detaining me with innumerable questions and laments prompted by fear, sadness, and uncertainty. They were in despair over what

might become of them now that their best friend was gone, but here again there was no whisper against those who had sympathized with all that he opposed. There was no more pathetic symbol of the loss the Nation suffered in that dark time than the distracted grief and bewilderment of these unhappy people.

CHAPTER XVI

Appointed by General Howard, Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for the District of Columbia, etc. Two early circulars. General Grant's "diffidence." I assume the editorship of the *Memphis Post*. Organization of public school system of Tennessee. Grant is nominated for President. His disinclination to "make the sacrifice."

LATE in the month of May, 1865, a despatch was sent to me from Washington ordering me to report at once to General Howard, who had been appointed by Andrew Johnson head of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. I was away from Memphis at the time, making a most interesting tour of inspection along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, and striving to establish better relations between the emancipated slave and the ex-slave owner, now largely represented by the returning Confederate soldiers in that region. The message, therefore, failed to reach me, but a second despatch, sent out on the heels of the first one, found me, and I lost no time in starting for Washington. Arrived at the Capitol, after a brief chat with General Grant, General Rawlins, and the other officers of Grant's staff, I reported myself for duty at General Howard's headquarters. The General told me that I was to assume charge of the District of Columbia, including Alexandria, Fairfax, and Loudon counties

in Virginia, and also a general supervision of freedmen's affairs in Maryland. He desired me to join with the other assistant commissioners, many of whom were already assembled, and assist in preparing the regulations for the conduct of the Bureau under the law of Congress. In further conversation with General Howard he told me of the appointments already made, among others that of Colonel Osborn to the State of Mississippi. Knowing the ground as I necessarily did, and feeling that the chief of the Bureau would welcome any honest expression of opinion, I suggested to him that it was, in my judgment, a mistake not to retain in Mississippi my Assistant General Superintendent, Colonel Samuel Thomas, — a man who already knew the routine of his duties and who, as his record indicated, was so eminently fitted to deal with all the complicated conditions of that State. The suggestion commended itself so fully to General Howard that he transferred Colonel Osborn to Florida, where he did excellent work, — later, in the rehabilitation of that State, serving it as United States Senator, — and appointed Colonel, then General, Thomas, Assistant Commissioner to the State of Mississippi.

The assistant commissioners assembled in Washington met day after day, and agreed upon the division of the functions of the Bureau. Special officers were to be placed in charge of a division for recording official acts relating to labor, schools, and the quartermaster's and commissary supplies, a land division, a financial division, and one controlling the medical and hospital service.¹ After

¹ Peirce, *A Chapter in Reconstruction*, p. 48. See particularly, O. O. Howard's *Autobiography*, Part III, *Reconstruction*, Chapter XLVIII.

considerable discussion of other features of the task before us, we submitted our notes to General Howard, who then asked me to take this material and work it over as best I could. This I did, striving to keep before me that ideal of the service with which General Grant had imbued me, and to incorporate this, in so far as I might, into the working regulations of the new Bureau. The statement was based of course upon what the assistant commissioners had already determined upon. I gave it over again to General Howard in the handwriting, I remember, of my clerk, Major Clarke, who had followed me from the Freedmen's Department in the Valley. It passed in regular course through the hands of General Grant, Secretary Stanton, and President Johnson, and was returned to General Howard with the approval of the President, having been altered only in a single phrase. It was printed as follows, as Circular No. 5, and General Howard, referring to that circular, generously stated that it was the product of his assistant commissioners, and remarked that upon it the "transactions of the Bureau have thus far been founded":¹

CIRCULAR No. 5

WAR DEPARTMENT,
BUREAU OF REFUGEES, FREEDMEN, AND ABANDONED LANDS,
WASHINGTON, MAY 30, 1865.

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS.

I. The headquarters for the Assistant Commissioners will, for the present, be established as follows, viz.: For Virginia, at Richmond, Va.; for North Carolina, at Raleigh N. C.; for South Carolina and Georgia, at Beaufort, S. C.; for Alabama, at Mont-

¹ Speech at Kennebunk, Me., *N. Y. Tribune*, Aug. 22, 1865.

gomery, Alabama; for Kentucky and Tennessee, at Nashville, Tenn.; for Missouri and Arkansas, at St. Louis, Mo.; for Mississippi, at Vicksburg, Miss.; for Louisiana, at New Orleans, La.; for Florida, at Jacksonville, Fla.

II. Assistant Commissioners not already at their posts will make all haste to establish their headquarters, acquaint themselves with their fields, and do all in their power to quicken and direct the industry of refugees and freedmen, that they and their communities may do all that can be done for the season, already so far advanced, to prevent starvation and suffering and promote good order and prosperity. Their attention is directed to Circular No. 2, from this bureau, indicative of the objects to be attained.

III. Relief establishments will be discontinued as speedily as the cessation of hostilities and the return of industrial pursuits will permit. Great discrimination will be observed in administering relief, so as to include none that are not absolutely necessitous and destitute.

IV. Every effort will be made to render the people self-supporting. Government supplies will only be temporarily issued to enable destitute persons speedily to support themselves, and exact accounts must be kept with each individual or community, and held as a lien upon their crops. The ration for the destitute will be that already provided in General Orders No. 30, War Department, series 1864. The commissioners are especially to remember that their duties are to enforce, with reference to these classes, the laws of the United States.

V. Loyal refugees, who have been driven from their homes, will, on their return, be protected from abuse, and the calamities of their situation relieved as far as possible. If destitute, they will be aided with transportation, and food when deemed expedient, while in transitu, returning to their former homes.

VI. Simple good faith, for which we hope on all hands from those concerned in the passing away of slavery, will especially relieve the Assistant Commissioners in the discharge of their duties toward the freedmen, as well as promote the general welfare. The Assistant Commissioners will everywhere declare and

protect their freedom, as set forth in the proclamations of the President and the laws of Congress.

VII. In all places where there is an interruption to civil law, or in which local courts, by reason of old codes, in violation of the freedom guaranteed by the proclamation of the President and laws of Congress, disregard the negro's right to justice before the laws in not allowing him to give testimony, the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen being committed to this bureau, the Assistant Commissioners will adjudicate, either themselves or through officers of their appointment, all difficulties arising between negroes themselves, or between negroes and whites or Indians, except those in military service, so far as recognizable by military authority, and not taken cognizance of by other tribunals, civil or military, of the United States.

VIII. Negroes must be free to choose their own employers, and be paid for their labor. Agreements should be free, *bona fide* acts, approved by proper officers, and their inviolability enforced on both parties. The old system of overseers, tending to compulsory unpaid labor and acts of cruelty and oppression, is prohibited. The unity of families and all the rights of the family relation will be carefully guarded. In places where the local statutes make no provision for the marriage of persons of color, the Assistant Commissioners are authorized to designate an officer who shall keep a record of marriages, which may be solemnized by any ordained minister of the gospel, who shall make a return of the same, with such items as may be required for registration at places designated by the Assistant Commissioner. Registrations already made by United States officers will be carefully preserved.

IX. Assistant Commissioners will instruct their receiving and disbursing officers to make requisition upon all officers, civil or military, in charge of funds, abandoned lands, etc., within their respective territories, to turn over the same in accordance with the orders of the President. They will direct their medical officers to ascertain the facts and necessities connected with the medical and sanitary condition of refugees and freedmen. They will instruct their teachers to collect the facts in reference to the progress of the work of education, and aid it with as few changes as possible

to the close of the present season. During the school vacation of the hot months, special attention will be given to the provision for the next year.

X. Assistant Commissioners will aid refugees and freedmen in securing titles to land according to law. This may be done for them as individuals or by encouraging joint stock companies.

XI. This bureau being under the War Department, all rules and regulations governing officers under accountability for property apply as set forth in the revised regulations of the army. All other persons in the service of the bureau are also subject to military jurisdiction.

XII. Assistant Commissioners will require regular and complete reports from their subordinates, and will themselves report quarterly as directed by law, and correspond frequently with this bureau, directing to the Commissioner in person.

O. O. HOWARD,

Major-General, Commissioner Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, etc.

Approved June 2, 1865.

ANDREW JOHNSON,

President of the United States.

It is not my purpose to enter with any detail into the history of the labors or difficulties of the Freedmen's Bureau, but it seems worth while to add my testimony to the mass already accumulated in witness of the great work which the Bureau accomplished. The achievements of an organization led by good and gifted men such as Howard, Armstrong, and Saxton—together with others like them—cannot be dismissed with a sneer; the time will come when the work of the Freedmen's Bureau as an organization will be more justly estimated than it is now, and we shall discriminate between the immense service it performed and the individual elements of corruption which without doubt existed. What I have already said with reference to the work of my officers in the Valley may be repeated

in connection with the work of the Bureau.¹ No human agency could have come through the trial without incurring and deserving criticism, but the amount of positive good accomplished by both agencies will certainly be found to offset the points wherein they failed. In partial refutation of the sweeping accusation of sentimentality which is so often made against the officers of the Bureau, I cannot forbear from quoting a circular issued by the Assistant Commissioner for Mississippi which I find among my papers, and which is characteristic of Colonel Thomas's attitude toward his charge. Evidently there were officers of freedmen who based their conduct on a sense of justice and uprightness, and who showed no tendency to coddle the ex-slave.²

BUREAU OF REFUGEES, FREEDMEN, AND ABANDONED LANDS,
OFFICE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR STATE OF MISSISSIPPI,
VICKSBURG, MISS., JAN. 2, 1866.

CIRCULAR NO. 2.

TO THE COLORED PEOPLE OF MISSISSIPPI:

Having been charged with the affairs of the Freedmen's Bureau in Mississippi, I am your lawful protector and advisor; and, to some extent, am held responsible for your conduct. If you suffer, or become idle or vicious, blame is attached to me or my officers, even when the fault is not ours.

¹ An admirable characterization of Edgar Gardner Murphy's should be quoted here: "It was the period of reconstruction,—a period of much administrative sordidness, but also of memorable heroism among numbers of the men and women who undertook the freedmen's initiation into the experience of the citizen. Its successes, however, were hidden deep, not easily observable; its blunders were observable and conspicuous." *The Present South*, p. 261.

² See also *Documents Relating to Reconstruction*, pp. 30-31, W. L. Fleming, editor. Circular of instruction addressed by Joseph Warren, State Superintendent of Education for the State of Mississippi, to other officers of the Freedmen's Bureau of that State.

With the end of 1865, your contracts expired. My officers approved the contracts, and did all they could to compel both you and your employers to live up to them. In many places these contracts did not secure you more than food and clothes, because you contracted so late that it was impossible to raise a crop.

Many complaints are made that you did not regard a contract as sacred ; that you failed to work as you had agreed ; acted as you pleased ; and visited at a distance when you knew that your employer would lose all by your failure to keep your contract. On the other hand, it is said by you that the planters have failed to pay and treat you as agreed upon.

This is all wrong. Your contracts were explained to you, and their sacredness impressed upon you again and again. You know that when you make a contract you are bound to give all the labor for which your employer agrees to pay. Efforts have been made by my officers to compel you to perform labor according to agreements, that employers might have no excuse for failing to do their part.

The time has arrived for you to contract for another year's labor. I wish to impress upon you the importance of doing this at once. You know that if a crop of cotton is raised, the work must be begun soon, and the hands employed for the year. If you do not contract with the men who wish to employ you, what do you propose to do? You cannot live without work of some kind. Your houses and lands belong to the white people ; and you cannot expect that they will allow you to live on them in idleness. It would be wrong for them to do so ; and no officer of the Government will protect you in it. If you stay on the plantations where you are, you must agree to work for the owners of them. If not, move out of the way, and give place to more faithful laborers.

I hope you are all convinced that you are not to receive property of any kind from the Government, and that you must labor for what you get like other people. I often hear that you are crowding into towns, refuse to hire out, and are waiting to see what Government will do for you. As the representative of

the Government, I tell you that is very foolish ; and your refusal to work is used by your enemies to your injury. I know you can get good wages with considerate employers, who will treat you well, and pay for all you do. Everything possible shall be done to secure you good treatment. Make contracts for the year and go to work, and you will secure homes. The Government hopes you will do your duty ; and in return will secure you the rights of freedmen. The season in which planters will think it worth while to employ you will soon be passed ; and if then you are found idle, you may be taken up and set to work where you will not like it. The State cannot and ought not to let any man lie about idle, without property, doing mischief. A vagrant law is right in principle. I cannot ask the civil officers to leave you idle, to beg or steal. If they find any of you without business and means of living, they will do right if they treat you as bad persons, and take away your misused liberty.

Some of you have the absurd notion that if you put your hands to a contract, you will somehow be made slaves. This is all nonsense, made up by some foolish or wicked person. There is no danger of this kind to fear ; nor will you be branded when you get on a plantation. Any white man treating you so would be punished. Your danger lies exactly in the other direction. If you do not have some occupation, you will be treated as vagrants, and made to labor on public works.

Do not believe all the bad stories you hear. Malicious persons take pleasure in making you afraid. Do not listen to them. All their croaking certainly does you no good. Do they tell you how to get food and clothes without work ?

You must be obedient to the law. I do not think the people of Mississippi have made all laws that relate to you as they ought to have done. But, even if there be some things denied to you as yet, which you wish to gain, you cannot get them by disobedience and idleness. You cannot make people treat you well by showing them that you do not deserve it. If you wish for rights, do right yourselves. If you desire privileges, show that they may be safely intrusted to you. Such a course, with patience, will make you happy and prosperous.

I hope that a sense of justice, benevolence, and enlightened self-interest will lead the white people to set you a good example of faithfulness and honor in observing contracts.

SAMUEL THOMAS,
Assistant Commissioner, State of Mississippi.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF MISSISSIPPI,
VICKSBURG, MISS., Jan. 2, 1866.

I cordially approve this excellent Circular.

TH. H. WOOD, *Maj.-Gen'l Vols.*,
Commanding.

When General Samuel Thomas left the Department of Mississippi in April, 1866, for other important service in the Bureau, General Wood again expressed in warmest terms his approval of Thomas's course there, which had won for him not only the esteem and approbation of the army, "but of the vast mass of the population of the State, both white and black." Mr. Carl Schurz, too, in his report to President Johnson on the affairs of the freed people, gives space to a long and valuable letter from General Thomas, whom he evidently regarded as one of the most efficient of the commissioners. It was Thomas's opinion, however,—stated by himself,—that the freedmen perhaps had never suffered so much as they did at that time under the partially re-established civil laws of the State.

General Howard, when I entered upon my labors as Assistant Commissioner, assigned to me an office in the same building where his headquarters were established,¹

¹ Under the paragraph headed "District of Columbia," in his first Report to the President on the Bureau, General Howard says: "As soon as the Bureau was organized I called to Washington Colonel John Eaton, Jr., from the Mississippi Valley, where he had been acting for two or three

and from thence I carried on my work upon the same general principles that had governed me in the Valley.

During this time I was able to see a good deal of General Grant,—a privilege I had greatly missed during the previous year or more. The army was being mustered out of service, and his duties kept him much at his headquarters in Washington. I recall in particular one visit to his headquarters which has always amused me. Two English Congregational ministers, the Rev. Dr. Vaughn, editor of the *British Quarterly Review*, and the Rev. Dr. Raleigh, pastor of a prominent Congregational church in England, the name of which I have forgotten, had come to America as representatives from Great Britain to the Congregational Conference held in Boston in the summer of 1865. Before leaving this country, these gentlemen made a somewhat extended tour, and in due time came to Washington. They called upon me with a letter of introduction, and were very anxious to see something of the work of the Freedmen's Bureau. Dr. Vaughn was not inclined to look too favorably upon the Union cause, but he was deeply and sincerely impressed by what he saw of the relief and educational work among the Negroes, and before he left America his views had undergone a considerable change. Dr. Raleigh's sympathies were fully with the North, and much good-natured chaffing between us resulted. I took a carriage and devoted the better part of a day to showing them about,

years as superintendent of freedmen, and where he acquired the full confidence of the War Department, and gave him charge of the district above described. He has aided me materially also by his practical views upon matters connected with the general field." A report of the conditions in the district alluded to then follows.

thinking the time not ill-spent, and late in the afternoon I brought them to General Grant's headquarters. Having ascertained that the General would receive us, I ushered them into Grant's office, which Dr. Vaughn afterwards described as "much the sort of room in which a London attorney might be imagined giving audience to his clients." Certainly there was nothing in Grant's surroundings or in the externals of his appearance to indicate that he was one of the greatest men of his age. He was dressed in a plain business suit of some light material, and the only object suggestive of his military rank was an old army hat with a cord and tassel in which a single strand of gold thread was twisted. The hat was lying on the table before him. I could see that the visitors were a good deal bewildered, and as Grant himself was a man of few words, conversation seemed destined to languish. Presently, however, the General expressed his mind somewhat freely on the attitude of the English press during the war, and Dr. Vaughn bestirred himself to prove that not all the newspapers had underrated the Northern cause. After some further discussion, in which Grant spoke with enthusiasm of the difficulties of the war out of which the North had come victorious, we took leave of him and returned to the carriage. The gentlemen were evidently pondering upon what they had seen. "Well," said I, with a view to probing them a little, "why were you so silent?" "Why was General Grant so silent?" they questioned in return. "*We* were somewhat abashed." I laughed, remembering the General's usual modesty and his aversion to being lionized. "General Grant was abashed too!" I replied.

Dr. Vaughn afterward wrote a very entertaining description of his American tour, which may be found in volume forty-two of the *British Quarterly Review*. He recounts the interview with General Grant, but strangely enough depicts the General as something of a braggart, — an odd misrepresentation, which must, I think, have resulted from the efforts of the good doctor to reproduce the peculiar plainness and colloquial quality of Grant's speech. The article, even at this day, is well worth reading.

In December, 1865, I resigned my office in the Freedmen's Bureau and accepted an offer to go to Tennessee and establish a newspaper in Memphis to be called the *Memphis Post*. A paper of strong Union principles was badly needed in that district, and the *Post* was for a long time the only sheet of that character published between St. Louis and the Gulf, save an unimportant little paper printed half in French and half in English published at New Orleans. The *Post* was a weekly, tri-weekly, and daily. It supported the policy of the Government as represented by Congress and by General Grant as head of the military power, but it was opposed to the methods of Andrew Johnson. The task of editing it at that time and in that place was no sinecure.

Meanwhile the interest in the educational affairs of the State was reviving somewhat, and in 1867 a legislative effort was made to meet the question of common schools for all the children of the State, including the Negro. I was appointed superintendent of the State system of public schools provided by the act of 1867, and for about three years labored to build up a proper school

system under a law which was faulty and among a people many of whom were openly rebellious against the organization of any school system at all. I was also in correspondence with the newly appointed school superintendents of Florida, North Carolina, and Arkansas. The Tennessee law, poor as it was, was in advance of public sentiment, and the legislation of 1870 practically abolished the entire system and relinquished the responsibility of the maintenance of schools to the separate counties. There were, I believe, one hundred and eighty-five thousand children in attendance when the schools were closed. The result of this change was that few counties levied any school tax, and in many not a single school, either public or private, was to be found. In 1873 the evil was corrected by further legislation.¹

It was during these years in Tennessee that the question of Grant's nomination for the Presidency was first discussed. In the work of reorganizing the State of Tennessee, I had been selected by the Republicans as a member of their State Committee, and not unnaturally I went quite often to Washington. In regard to the course our political affairs were taking, Grant had little or nothing to say, but Rawlins did not hesitate to declare it to be his opinion that the General must decide whether or not to accept the nomination; he believed it to be coming. I suppose the American youth is ordinarily not averse to dreaming that he may be President some day, and the American man in his maturity has not

¹ See Biographical Sketch, p. xvii. See also, Bureau of Education, Circular of Information, No. 5, 1893. Chapter XII (by T. P. Thomas) The Public School System of Tennessee, p. 283.

often demonstrated any unwillingness to accept the highest gift in the Nation's power, but Grant was sincerely disturbed by the possibility of his nomination. On one of the few occasions when he could be induced to talk about it, he remarked that should he be selected it would be the first time the country would have called upon him to make a personal sacrifice. He considered that the Nation had rewarded him amply for what he had done, and he was inclined to look forward, as head of the army, to a life of comparative ease and freedom from responsibility. His pay was sufficient to support his family, and this release from financial worry was an immense boon to one who had struggled through periods of positive want. More than this, he felt that every man was his friend. The tokens of loving admiration which poured in upon him from all sides were very precious to him; he spoke of them with the greatest appreciation, and said should he be forced into politics he would exchange the sympathy and confidence of the Nation for the assaults of political parties. Popularity such as Grant enjoyed would have cajoled many a man into the belief that his position was impregnable. Not so this man, whose insight was so keen as to make his speech at times prophetic. It will be remembered with what simplicity he received the nomination when it was tendered to him, and how unpretentiously he wrote out his letter of acceptance in the course of a few moments and in the presence of a group of influential men, who called upon him, concluding the letter with that invocation so characteristic of his directness and quiet dignity, — "Let us have peace." He made scarcely any

political speeches, leaving all that to Rawlins and the orators of his party. The publicity was hateful to him; and those of us who knew Grant best never for a moment doubted that his acceptance of the Presidency was, as he had said, the single sacrifice which he felt his country had demanded of him.

CHAPTER XVII

President Grant's interest in education. He visits West Point. Report of the Board of Visitors for 1869. Anecdotes connected with the Academy and Grant's standing as a cadet. Grant and the Peabody Fund. He champions the Bureau of Education. I become U. S. Commissioner of Education in 1870. The President's earnest support of educational measures. He attends some early "Teachers' Conventions." Proposes to veto Butler's bill. He "cuts red tape" and interests himself in the subject of English in our colleges. His speech on education at Des Moines in 1876.

IN looking back over my own life it is curious to me to mark how my interest and energies centred in the subject of education,—even when I believed myself to be busy about other things. After my graduation from Dartmouth in 1854, I had plunged at once into educational work, becoming principal of Ward School in Cleveland, Ohio, and two years later I accepted the position of superintendent of schools in Toledo, studying privately meanwhile for the ministry. At the conclusion of three years' work in the Toledo schools I resigned in order to study theology at Andover, and by 1861 I had entered the army as a chaplain. The work among the freedmen soon brought me in direct touch again with educational problems, and in spite of circumstances which might easily have forced me permanently into journalism or politics, I found myself, as already mentioned, superin-

tendent of the school system in Tennessee. So much in explanation of the fact that in 1869—while I was still State superintendent—General Grant appointed me one of the Board of Visitors to West Point. The personnel of the Board is not without interest, as it was the first of its kind appointed by President Grant. Military men are rather conspicuous in the list by their absence. Judge C. H. Warren, of Boston, was president of the Board. The members were General David Hunter, United States Army; M. B. Anderson, LL.D., President of Rochester University; Hon. Walter Q. Gresham, Judge of the United States Court of Indiana, and later Mr. Cleveland's Secretary of State; Hon. Benjamin F. Loan, for some time member of Congress from Missouri; R. L. Stanton, D.D., President of Miami University, Ohio. I was chosen secretary of the Board. The report we tendered was of interest because we recommended strongly that some provision be made for the subdivision of the graduates, and that facilities be offered for advanced post-graduate work. This plan for special and longer courses of study has since been carried out in somewhat different form through the establishment under Secretary Root's influence, and by the War Department, of the Army School at Washington. Our advocacy of a similar plan in 1869 was practically the result of our talks and intercourse with President Grant while at West Point.

Grant had turned from his official duties for the moment, and had come to West Point with his wife and daughter to attend the graduation of his son Frederick. The President was greatly plagued by the sight-seers, who followed him about with the untiring persistency of

a crowd bent on satisfying its curiosity at all hazards. Men, women, and children swarmed into the dining-room, and possessed themselves of every point of vantage whenever he appeared in public. At dress parade they were with difficulty restrained from fairly interrupting the manœuvres. The crowd in the large dining hall was particularly disturbing to Grant, and our Board finally took pity on him and invited him to join us at our table in a private dining-room which had been put at our disposal. This suggestion he accepted with evident relief, but even here stray sight-seers would pester him by peering in at the windows of the room, which was on the ground floor and easily accessible from the street. Grant was still the same modest, unassuming man that he had always been, and always would be, and such demonstrations disturbed and bewildered him very much. He cared very little for the details of his dress, and beyond the immaculateness of his linen evidently bestowed little thought upon his appearance. I recollect that Mr. Thayer, a prominent Boston man who was visiting West Point at the time, asked me if I thought it would be indiscreet to present the President with a new silk hat to replace an old one which Grant was then wearing. The President was wholly oblivious of the dismay his head-gear had occasioned at least one of his admirers, but he received the silk hat graciously, and soon appeared in it, much to Mr. Thayer's relief.

Dr. Anderson and I were much together during these days at the Academy; we occupied adjoining rooms, and discussed pedagogical problems so far into the night and with so much enthusiasm that our next-door neighbor — a fellow-member of our Board — remonstrated with us for

disturbing the peace. We were also eager to learn all we could of Grant's record as a cadet at West Point, and we looked with interest at the cut made by Grant's saber on the rafters of the old riding academy when "Uncle Sam," as his classmates called him, made the record jump on a horse that could be ridden only by Grant and one other cadet in the Academy. Much has since been written of Grant's standing while at West Point, — some of it marked more by sensationalism than by truth — but the careful accounts given by General Horace Porter, Hamlin Garland, and other writers, have familiarized every one now with the main outline of that story. The documents of the Academy were thrown open to Dr. Anderson and myself at the time of which I write, and we took the keenest interest in every detail connected with Grant's record. It was characteristic of him that he should have stood highest in mathematics and philosophy, while in the courses that most men found easy he ranked below the average. It was always the toughest nut that Grant cracked most readily. He made a failure of the ordinary business routine in which your average man succeeds best, but he conducted some of the most remarkable campaigns in the history of the world. Many years later Grant himself spoke to me of the ease with which mathematics came to him. It was the morning following my return to Washington, I remember, after an official visit to the Vienna Exhibition and a study of education in Europe. I was walking rapidly along a street, too early for the street cars, on my way to call our family physician for a sick child, when near the White House I met President Grant, who asked if I were taking a morning walk. At my reply,

giving the purpose of the walk, he turned, saying, "I believe I will walk with you," and immediately began to ask me questions about what I had seen of education abroad. After alluding to several points which had interested me, I remarked that one special difference between the best methods over there and our own was the extent to which Europeans used illustrations, — an appeal to the sense of sight. The teacher would point out the application of the illustration when assigning the lesson, and thus prepare the student's mind for a new subject. Grant asked me to be more specific, and I said, "You will remember at West Point there was a set of illustrations of mathematical principles by Olivier, the noted Frenchman, in which the sense of sight was successfully brought to aid the mind in the solution of abstruse problems." "No," said he, "I do not remember them; I don't think I ever saw them." And in the same familiar strain he added, "I had no occasion for any aids in mathematics. The subject was so easy to me as to come almost by intuition."

On the other hand, there were subjects which Grant found distinctly uncongenial and to which he gave scant attention. One day, during our West Point experience in 1869, as Dr. Anderson and I approached the hotel about noon, Grant, who was seated on the piazza, looked up and inquired what we had heard that morning. We told him we had been listening to the examination in French. The President then asked us how "Fred" stood in that subject, and when we replied that "Fred" did not excel in French, Grant promptly remarked, "That is the way it was with his father!"

Speaking of the West Point examinations reminds me

that General Myer, the inventor of the Signal Service Code, came to me and requested me if possible to make sure that Grant be present at the examination of the cadets in signalling, and promised to give the President every opportunity to apply any tests to the class that Grant himself should select. At that time the subject had been recently introduced at West Point, and its fate was undecided. General Myer, it will be recalled, had been the chief of the Signal Service Bureau, but had fallen under Stanton's displeasure, and the War Department had but lately restored him to his place. He was anxious that President Grant should examine the case for himself. It so happened that the exercises were especially attractive and interesting to the President, who later, after careful examination of the matter, warmly advocated General Myer's cause.

If there is one question upon which my personal experience with Grant justifies me in speaking with assurance it is in regard to a subject with which few people realize he was concerned at all. I mean his interest in education. Every one recalls, of course, his association with the work of the Peabody Fund as one of the original trustees, but even there the extent of his influence is not generally understood. Dr. Barnas Sears, the gifted agent of the Fund, who first met and solved the question of its practical application, told me that during some of the early meetings of the trustees there had been a movement to limit the benefits of Mr. Peabody's gift to the children of those men belonging to the wealthy class who had been ruined by the war. There was undoubtedly much need for some such aid, but it would have been a fatal mistake to appropriate for this purpose a fund which, rightly administered, served

to put the system of universal education in the South firmly upon its feet by stimulating the inauguration of State and city systems of education and by preparing teachers to serve in the public schools thus established. Dr. Sears informed me that in his judgment it was Grant's advocacy of the principle of universal education for which he cast his vote that settled the ultimate disposition of the Fund. The problem of equipping the country for the task of educating the millions of ignorant freedmen with whom our destiny as a Nation was now joined, appeared to Grant one of the gravest of our difficulties. The Bureau of Education, which had been organized in 1867 and in operation for three years under Dr. Henry Barnard,—one of the most distinguished educators in the country,—had failed to commend itself to Congress. Far from giving the Bureau its co-operation, Congress had refused to publish its reports, had cut down the salary of the Commissioner one thousand dollars, reduced the Bureau's clerks to two in number, and made it subordinate to the Department of the Interior. It seemed probable, moreover, that the appropriation would not be renewed at all.¹ It was at this point that President Grant took hold. "With millions of ex-slaves upon our hands to be educated," said he, "this is not the time to suppress an office for facilitating education. The Bureau shall have another trial." A little later, word was brought me through Senator Patterson of New

¹ Senator Hoar, on the Committee of Education and Labor, helped materially to save the Bureau from annihilation at this time. In his *Autobiography* (Vol. I, p. 264) appears the following reference: "The result of the strife was that the Bureau was put on a firmer footing with a more liberal provision, and it has since been, under General Eaton and Dr. Harris, the accomplished and devoted Commissioners, of very great value and service to the country."

Hampshire — my native State — and General Swayne of Ohio, that President Grant desired me to become United States Commissioner of Education. The difficulties besetting the office were manifestly very great. It was looked upon as a fifth wheel of the Government, and the chances of my being able to make its position more enviable by demonstrating its usefulness to the country seemed to me discouragingly slender. I did not feel at all sure that I was the man for the place. However, after some little time I accepted the office, saying to President Grant that I had been through one crucial struggle under his orders, that I knew he would stand by me if I behaved myself, and that I would undertake the task. I entered upon the duties of my office March 16, 1870. During the entire time that Grant remained in the Presidency, he was my kindly counsellor and my general support. Indeed without him the Bureau could hardly have become — what it has been said to be — the most influential office of education in the world. Grant's messages¹ at this time often contained some allusion to the subject of education, and his interest in the matter, and his wisdom, came out in innumerable ways.

Whenever the President's duties permitted, he gave unhesitating personal proof of his interest in the Bureau's

¹ The Annual Message for 1872 contains the following paragraph: "The rapidly increasing interest in education is a most encouraging factor in the current history of the country, and it is no doubt true that this is due in great measure to the efforts of the Bureau of Education. The office is continually receiving evidences, which abundantly prove its efficiency, from the various institutions of learning and education of all kinds throughout the country.

"The report of the Commissioner contains a vast amount of educational details of great interest."

work. I remember that Grant chanced to be in Cleveland on one occasion when the National Educational Association met in that city. I had recently been appointed Commissioner, and I made my first official speech before that body of educators. Grant came in with his friends and listened to part of the speech. At the time of which I write our school system was not so well established as it is now, and the fact that the President countenanced the schoolmen and their plans was a distinct advantage. At the meetings of the school superintendents which took place in Washington for several years in succession, it was no unusual occurrence to see Grant slip quietly into a seat and listen attentively to the papers and discussions for as long a time as he could spare from his executive duties. He took no part in the exercises, — I cannot remember that he ever spoke to these audiences, — but every one there felt the influence of his presence, and the fact of his attendance had its effect upon the Congressmen, many of whom were indifferent enough to the cause of education. The systems that were struggling for recognition in different parts of the country were thus greatly benefited by Grant's quiet method of manifesting his approval of educational work in general, and also of the efforts of the Bureau. He never involved himself with any of the questions concerning technical details of education, but he was keenly alive to the remoter causes and influences which should determine its growth and character. He used sometimes to allude to the educational influence of the postal service, — a factor of the very greatest importance, especially in the development of the unsettled portions of our country, but one to which most of us have grown so accustomed

that we take it quite for granted, forgetting how varied its functions really are.

Two or three special instances occur to me wherein Grant came to the rescue of the best interests of education. One case refers particularly to the District of Columbia. It will be recalled that at one time the District schools bore the entire expense of their maintenance and equipment just as such expenses are ordinarily borne by the schools of the separate States. In view of the fact that the National Government owned the streets and the public buildings, it seemed only fair that it should bear half the expenses of the District, and should do its share toward providing schools for the children of the army of employees in its service. In any other similar community — as, for instance, at a fort or military post — there would be no question of the obligation of the National Government to provide educational facilities for the soldiers' children. Mr. Wilson, at that time the school superintendent for the District of Columbia, and a very able man, supported the movement to divide the school appropriation equally between the District and the central Government. He secured the signatures of the superintendents from all over the country who were meeting in Washington year after year, and that, together with the fact that President Grant was known to be a strong advocate of the measure, eventually led Congress to decide upon it favorably.

During those disturbing years, when the interests of the partly reconstructed South were so much spoil in the hands of the aspirants for political favors, the schools of the South had a hard struggle for existence. Between

local prejudice and political trickery nothing but the devotion of educators and philanthropists saved the public school system from utter ruin. Of the former class, by the way, not the least devoted, as Dr. Mayo has pointed out, were those Southern women who threw themselves heart and soul into the cause of education. The fruit of these labors was about to be destroyed by a clause in the Civil Rights Bill, then under discussion in the House of Representatives, which if enacted would compel all the school children throughout the country to attend the same district schools regardless of race or color. While the discussion was at its height I received a telegram from Dr. Sears, the agent of the Peabody Fund, requesting an interview, and stating, if I remember rightly, that the sender was "out of politics." I replied at once, feeling very much concerned that Dr. Sears should have felt impelled to telegraph at all, for we were such good friends and had been so closely associated in many educational matters that he might have been sure of his welcome at any time. The telegram I afterwards found was merely to avoid all semblance of political intrigue. Dr. Sears was deeply stirred by the bill under discussion in the House. He had just returned from a somewhat extended trip through the South, where he had been trying to find out from the leading men there what was the local sentiment on the subject. The result of his investigation was that he felt convinced that the common schools of seven States would be abolished should the bill become a law. This conviction tallied with the impressions I had been gathering from an extended correspondence into which I had entered officially with the Southern educa-

tors and others interested. Among my informants was good Levi Coffin, the staunch abolitionist of Cincinnati to whom I have already referred, who wrote me in his quaint phrases, "Thee knows John, that all our schoolhouses would be burned should such a course be followed." Dr. Sears and I concluded that we had better bestir ourselves, and together we went about among the members of the House and Senate, placing before them our information on the subject. I had never known Dr. Sears more eloquent. He was especially impressive in talking with General Butler, who had the bill in hand. The General listened like a judge on the bench to Dr. Sears's earnest and logical statement of the case, and when Sears with great force and power had finished his argument, General Butler exclaimed, "This has settled one of the most serious problems of my life!"

After we had interviewed a number of the most prominent men in the House and Senate, Dr. Sears and I agreed that it would be a relief to know what Grant's position was in the matter. Accordingly we called upon him and told him what we had been trying to do. When we had finished our statement, Grant said to us in his usual quiet way, "I have read the bill to which you refer, and have made up my mind that if it comes to me I shall veto it."

We concluded that the subject was safe, and that we might have spared ourselves some unnecessary labor and anxiety. The question had been complicated by the advocacy of some good men, who saw in the separation of the white and black races in the schools of the Nation a dangerous tendency toward the creation of class

distinctions in our American life. It was the expression of a theory of equality right in itself, but which it would have been fatal at that moment to enforce.

In the execution of my duties as Commissioner of Education, I travelled a good deal from one State to another, and came to know many localities quite thoroughly. One quality among our people amused me very much, and that was the local State pride which seems to be characteristic of American communities. I grew to expect the residents of each State to boast of its own people as the most intelligent in the Union. I had been spending a short time in Texas, I remember, and on my way East again I boarded the steamer at Galveston which made connections with the railroad at New Orleans. As I sat on the deck of the boat, thinking over the lessons of my trip, I reflected that I had not heard any one claim for Texas intellectual superiority over the rest of the Nation. I soon fell into conversation with a man of striking appearance who turned out to have been the captain of that noted Confederate ship, the "Wanderer," which had made itself so feared during the war. Our conversation became more and more absorbing, and reached for me the summit of its interest when my companion informed me that during my visit in Texas I must surely have observed that I was becoming acquainted with the most intelligent people of any State in the Union. I held my peace, but determined to seek for some common standard of comparison by which the standing of the States might be measured. My mind turned to our two National institutions at West Point and Annapolis, and it occurred to me that as the requirements were the same at these schools for all parts of the country, the records of their

entrance examinations might throw some light on the subject, and give a reasonable measure of comparison,—allowance being made, of course, for the differences in the populations of the several States. In order to get the facts, red tape required that I should address my inquiry to the Secretary of my Department, who would convey it to each of the other Departments concerned—the War and the Navy—whose respective Secretaries would in turn forward the request to the authorities at Annapolis and West Point. This suggested the Office of Circumlocution and did not seem likely to encourage enterprise. I recollected General Grant's readiness of old to cut red tape when expedient, and having prepared blanks for two tables, one for West Point and one for Annapolis, I took them to the President in his executive office, intending to explain to him my object and show him the forms. When I entered the room, I found him in the midst of a semi-official conference with a number of prominent men. He motioned me to him, however, and I laid before him the blanks I had prepared. There was no chance, of course, for the detailed explanation I had expected to make,—nor was such an explanation necessary. Grant grasped at once the purpose the blanks were to serve, and promptly signed my papers without further formality. His quickness in seeing his way through an intricate lot of papers was phenomenal; he could fasten at once upon the essential element and supply the machinery necessary to set his ideas in action before the average man could fully have prepared himself to listen to his subordinate's report. I do not remember ever to have seen this quality commented upon as it deserves to be. We are apt to think

of Grant as belonging to the type of the slow and sure, and so in a sense he did, but his mental processes were magnificently direct and to the point. On the occasion of which I write, the President said to me in his quiet way, as he affixed his signature, "I wish you could obtain this sort of information from all the colleges in the country." "Well," said I, "if you will stand by me, I will try it." The result of this suggestion was the preparation by the Bureau of Education of a table calling for the result of the entrance examinations to our colleges. The blanks for Annapolis and West Point which Grant had approved were concerned only with the requirements in English. English, therefore, became conspicuous in the new investigation. At that time Harvard was practically the only American college that had begun to require examinations in English for admission to the college course. A reference to the returns made to the inquiries of the Bureau shows clearly how deficient the preparation was in this subject at that time. But the attention of the entire country was called to it by this somewhat formal investigation of the matter by the National agency, and the result of the effort which this investigation really inaugurated may be seen in the remarkable development of courses in English which is now manifested in the preparatory or secondary schools throughout the land.

It is an interesting fact, and one of which we should be proud, that both the great military leaders in the Civil War gave their personal efforts to the cause of education. It was one of the finest of General Lee's many fine qualities that he should have had it in him to turn aside from all the inducements for gaining wealth which were thrown

open to him and devote himself so earnestly and wisely to the education of the South. In addition to his own labors as President of the Washington-Lee University, he, like Grant, threw the weight of his influence into the labors of other men. His moral support of W. H. Ruffner, State superintendent of schools in Virginia, who has fitly been called the Horace Mann of the South, made Mr. Ruffner's administration far more efficient than it could otherwise have become. General Lee believed that all classes should be given the privileges of education in a free community, and he exerted himself bravely to that end. In the early years of my work as Commissioner of Education the course of political action had so far delayed the reorganization of Virginia that the schools were still under the partial control of military authority. The officers wishing to encourage Southern men and women to volunteer in the cause of education had advertised for Southern teachers to fill the various positions in the local schools. When I made an official visit to Petersburg, Virginia, the Board of Education of that city took me, I remember, to a certain school which had been supplied thus with a teacher, — a young man named Cook, who told me that he had been on General Lee's staff and that the General had strongly advised him to respond to the call for volunteer teachers. The school was one of those established for colored children, and was known, for purposes of convenience merely, as the "High School." Most of the little pupils did not know their letters. The ardor of the young teacher, however, was irreproachable. He told me that he felt convinced the Negro youth had a special aptitude for the study of languages, and presently with modest pride in his own

handiwork he called upon a troupe of small black boys and girls to recite in French. The "French class" had a somewhat hazy notion of what it was expected to do, but the intention and enthusiasm of pupils and teacher could not have been improved upon anywhere.

One more illustration of the interest which President Grant took in educational affairs and I shall have done with this series of stories. Fortunately we can turn to his own words for evidence of that interest, and such noble words they are that I shall quote them here, and so close my chapter. They were spoken on the occasion of a visit Grant made to Des Moines, Iowa, in September, 1876, and so far as I know they have been preserved in their entirety only in the newspapers of the day. There was some ill-natured scepticism at the time as to whether the brief speech was written by Grant himself or prepared for him by Judge C. C. Cole, with whom he was staying. Such ridiculous and debasing speculations never had any foundation to rest upon, and were finally dismissed by the emphatic statement of Judge Cole himself, when some ten years later he was interviewed by the reporter of a newspaper the name of which I have neglected to preserve, but which in 1884 reprinted the address quoted below. The circumstances under which it was delivered were these. Judge Cole tells the story: "Among those who presented themselves at the door [Grant, as the guest of Judge Cole, was protected by him against the multitudes who would have interviewed the President] was Professor Thompson, who was then superintendent of city schools. He wanted to ask that some opportunity be given the children to see the President. That at once struck me as a

proper request to grant, and I said, yes, it shall be done; the children shall see him at 2 P. M. to-morrow at Moore's Opera House. . . . Well, on the next afternoon, you remember, the Opera House was packed with children from parquet to gallery. There must have been twenty-five hundred children in the building. When I told General Grant I was going to take him to the Opera House so that the children could see him, he said at once, 'I cannot say anything to them.' I told him he need not, but I wanted to give the children an opportunity of seeing him. We went down at the hour named . . . and when . . . the children were all in and ready to receive the President, I took him by the arm and we marched on the platform, and the President was received by the children with enthusiasm. He said nothing, — we stood, simply being looked at. I suppose the General stood the ordeal well enough and could have remained in the position any length of time, but I could not. It made me nervous, and I could not stand it any longer, so I spoke a few words to the children, introducing the President. I told them he was a man of deeds not words, and so continued to speak for a few minutes. I then said that General Grant would say a few words, so that they might have it to say that they had heard him speak as well as seen him.

"From this meeting we went at once and entered our carriage and were driven over the city. The conversation during the ride very naturally drifted to the question of schools and children, and I suppose it was at this time that he conceived the thoughts which he uttered in his great speech in the evening. . . . After riding for some time

. . . the General said he would have something to say in the evening at the meeting which had been planned, [a Grand Army Convention] and asked that he might be driven back to the house so as to have an opportunity to jot down what he might say. We returned at once, and he immediately went to his room.

"In just forty minutes from the time General Grant entered the house supper was announced, and during that time he prepared the famous speech which he delivered that night."

In speaking of it, Grant told me afterwards that the notes were made on the backs of envelopes and the stray scraps of paper at hand in his room. I quote the address in full. It was one of the very few the President ever made :

"Comrades, — It always affords me much gratification to meet my old comrades in arms ten to fourteen years ago and to live over again in memory the trials and hardships of those days, hardships imposed for the preservation and perpetuation of our free institutions. We believed then, and believe now, that we had a government worth fighting for, and if need be dying for. How many of our comrades of those days paid the latter price for our preserved Union! Let their heroism and sacrifices be ever green in our memory. Let not the results of their sacrifice be destroyed. The Union and free institutions for which they fell should be held more dear for their sacrifice. We will not deny to any who fought against us any privileges under the government which we claim for ourselves; on the contrary, we welcome all such who come forward in good faith to build up the waste places and to perpetuate our institutions as against all enemies, as brothers in full interest with us in a common heritage. But we are not prepared to apologize for the part we took in the war. It is to be hoped that like trials will never again befall our country. In this sentiment no class of people can more heartily join than the soldier who submitted to the dangers, trials, and hardships of the camp and battlefield on which-

ever side he fought. No class of people are more interested in guarding against a recurrence of those days. Let us then begin by guarding against every enemy threatening the perpetuity of free Republican institutions.

"I do not bring into this assemblage politics, certainly not partisan politics, but it is a fair subject for soldiers in their deliberation to consider what may be necessary to secure the prize for which we battled. In a Republic like ours, where the citizen is the sovereign, and [the] official [is] the servant, where no power is exercised except by the will of the people, it is important that the sovereign — the people — should possess intelligence. The free school is the promoter of that intelligence which is to preserve us as a free nation.

"If we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line will not be Mason and Dixon's, but between patriotism and intelligence on the one side, and superstition, ambition, and ignorance on the other. Now this is the Centennial year of our national existence; I believe it is a good time to begin the work of strengthening the foundation of the house commenced by our patriotic forefathers one hundred years ago at Concord and Lexington. Let us all labor to add all needful guarantees for the more perfect security of Free Thought, Free Speech, and Free Press, pure morals, unfettered religious sentiment, and of equal rights and privileges to all men, irrespective of nationality, color, or religion.

"Encourage free schools, and resolve that not one dollar appropriated to their support, no matter how raised, shall be appropriated to any sectarian school. Resolve that neither State nor Nation nor both combined shall support institutions of learning other than those sufficient to afford every child growing up in the land the opportunity of good common school education unmixed with sectarian, pagan, or atheistical tenets. Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church, and the private school supported entirely by private contribution. Keep the Church and State forever separate. With these safeguards I believe that the battles which created 'the Army of the Tennessee' will not have been fought in vain."

CHAPTER XVIII

Some political memories. The great questions on which Grant "hammered." A sketch of what he achieved in our foreign and domestic affairs. His unwillingness to think evil. His promptitude in suppressing it when once admitted. A group of friends and advisers. "Zack" Chandler, — his honesty and courage. The Belknap tragedy. An ex-Confederate general and a Negro orator agree politically on Grant.

DURING the eight years of Grant's administration I came necessarily in touch with the men and events by which that administration is known, and although I make no claim to speak authoritatively of issues which are perhaps as puzzling to the historian as any with which he has to deal, I feel inclined, because of my personal relations with the President, to offer my impressions and testimony for whatever these may be worth. In my judgment Grant's service to the Nation immediately after the war and during the terms of his Presidency has never fully been recognized. No adequate attempt has yet been made to focus Grant's Presidential record in the light of his character as manifested throughout his career. Nor is this to be wondered at in view of the fierceness of those old encounters between men and parties, and the comparatively short time which has elapsed since the period of Grant's activity closed. Among the few historians whose work treats of the events of our own time it

is the fashion to refer somewhat grudgingly to the positive results of Grant's Presidential administration while commenting at length and with assurance on the failures which marred it.¹ My purpose in referring to Grant's political career is not by any means controversial, nor shall I attempt a critical analysis. I wish merely to indicate briefly a group of facts of general interest which may serve as a background to a few personal observations and anecdotes.

There was a series of questions dealing with our domestic prosperity and with our foreign relations to which Grant specially addressed himself. To several of these he referred eloquently in his first inaugural, prepared, as Badeau tells us, quite independently of the counsel which might have been offered him. It was prepared, indeed, at a time when the most serious charge which could be brought against Grant was his neglect to take counsel with men of experience in public affairs.

Of Grant's interest in educational matters I have already spoken at some length. Senator Hoar tells us that the President was among those who fully recognized the dangers of the Fifteenth Amendment unless offset by ample provision for education, — if need be at National expense. On March 30, 1870, in a special communication to Congress on the occasion of the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, Grant said: "The framers of our Constitution firmly believed that a republican government could not endure without intelligence generally diffused

¹ A notable exception to this is the Autobiography of Senator Hoar, who, though he finds much to condemn, presents the issues with his accustomed insight and fairmindedness. The most adequate treatment of the period is to be found, of course, in Volume VII of Rhodes's History.

among the people. The Father of his Country, in his Farewell Address, uses this language: 'Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the diffusion of general knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.' By such means only can the benefits contemplated by this amendment be secured." The quotation from Washington's address was suggested to Grant by Senator Hoar, who ascribed whatever elements of failure exist in the reconstruction measures to the defeat of the policy providing adequate educational opportunities.¹

Somewhat allied to the question of education—since this was so closely concerned with the fate of the freedman—was Grant's attitude toward the Indian. During my association with General Grant at the time of the war, he had spoken to me of the fraud and abuses among Indian agents which had come to his notice while on the Pacific Coast, and I was not surprised to find in his inaugural his pledge to "favor any course toward them [the "original occupants of this land," as Grant himself called them] which tends to their civilization and ultimate citizenship." To effect this, Grant experimented with the appointment of a native Indian Commissioner, hoping thereby to secure more unanimity between the interests of the tribes and the measures of the Government, but this proved impracticable. Very soon after his inauguration, he placed several of the Indian reservations in the hands of the Quakers, who, as he remarks in his first Message to

¹ Autobiography of Seventy Years, George F. Hoar, Vol. I, p. 255. See also p. 204.

Congress, are "known for their opposition to all strife, violence, and war, and are generally noted for their strict integrity and fair dealings." So well did this policy justify itself that in 1870, when Congress prohibited the employment of army officers in any civil capacity, thus necessitating the resignation of many Indian agents, the religious societies of every denomination, at President Grant's request, were invited to enter the field and combine the duties of Indian agent with the task of teaching and Christianizing the Indian tribes. Whatever criticism may be made against this movement the reports of the Indian Office declare that a far more devoted class of men were thus secured to serve in the capacity of agents. Largely through the President's influence upon public opinion, Congress in April, 1869 authorized the appointment of a Board of Indian Commissioners to inquire into the abuses of the service. Grant designated a group of remarkably competent and upright men, who served without recompense, and who were fully authorized to observe the workings of the Indian Office, report upon it, and advise any changes which they might see fit to suggest. This was one of the earliest and most effectual efforts made to reform the Indian service, and to Grant belongs the credit for initiating it. The Commission is still an active force in Indian affairs. The members of the Commission appointed by President Grant were able to check at once some of the worst frauds practised on the Indians. The head of the Bureau in 1877—Commissioner Hayt—says in his annual report for that year: "Since the year 1870 the influence exerted by the Board of Indian Commissioners has made itself felt in the puri-

fication of the Indian service. Prior to that time it was the custom to receive bids for annuity goods and supplies in classes. . . . Under this system the contract went year after year to one house, and was looked upon by the public as a practical monopoly, so much so that competition fell off, one house seeming always to have inside information from some one connected with the Bureau. The original Board of Indian Commissioners aimed its first blow at this faulty system, and secured a reform in this particular by requiring bids to be made for each article separately. . . . From this date a decided improvement in the manner of purchasing took place." The original Board resigned early in 1874, and at once a change for the worse became apparent. In July and August, however, their system was re-established with even better results than before. Mr. Welsh of Philadelphia, who served on the first Commission, I knew very well indeed, and with Mr. Felix R. Brunot of Pittsburg I had also a pleasant acquaintance. Mr. Welsh would often come to Washington for consultation with President Grant, and after meeting him would frequently spend a part of the evening with me, going over the details of his conference with the President. In this way I became very familiar with the Indian question; in fact a strong movement was on foot, participated in by some of the members of Congress, to turn the entire control of Indian education over to the Bureau of Education. This proposition I resisted, however, with all my might. The Bureau then had all it could do to hold its own and justify itself to the Nation and to Congress, and I felt the only course was to concentrate every energy upon the functions which it was already

called to perform. General Grant sustained the reservation policy in regard to the Indians. He recognized that unless the Indians were gathered together and protected, a slow, cruel war of extermination must be the alternative. At this time it should be remembered the Indians were capable of carrying on a warfare against the soldiers and settlers which would be impossible in their present diminished numbers, and they were constantly making determined efforts to avenge their wrongs and protect themselves against the white man. In advocating the plan of placing them on large reservations, Grant invariably asserted that eventually they were to become citizens of the United States. In his first Message to Congress he distinctly stated that they were to be induced as soon as possible to "take their lands in severalty and to set up Territorial governments for their own protection." This part of the original policy has often been inadequately or unreasonably enforced, and many grave abuses and much suffering have resulted in consequence.

In connection with Indian affairs I recall Grant's attitude on the question as to whether or not the Indian should be given a place in the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia. The Indian disturbances in the West were fresh in the public mind, and the red man could not be said to be popular with the average American who associated him with blood-curdling massacres. On the other hand there were those who looked upon him as a constant reproach to our civilization, — a victim of our cupidity and faithlessness. Neither group advocated his public appearance at our National festival. But Grant stoutly maintained the right of the native American to represent himself, his

interests, and his racial culture at a celebration intended to be typical of American life and progress. An Indian encampment was to have formed the basis for the Indian exhibit, but this proved impracticable, and the display consisted of articles of Indian manufacture, showing the native dress, customs, occupations, and so forth.

Grant's attitude toward the payment of our National debt and the return to a basis of honest money is perhaps too well known to need much emphasis. In private conversation he used to manifest a remarkable grasp of the situation, and on no subject did he express himself more eloquently. He speaks with splendid conviction upon both these matters in his first inaugural address and in his first Message to Congress. In the course of the latter he says:

"Among the evils growing out of the rebellion and not yet referred to, is that of an irredeemable paper currency. It is an evil which I hope will receive your most earnest attention. It is a duty, and one of the highest duties, of Government to secure to the citizen a medium of exchange of fixed, unwavering value. This implies a return to a specie basis, and no substitute for it can be devised. . . . I see but one way, and that is to authorize the Treasury to redeem its own paper at a fixed price whenever presented, and to withhold from circulation all currency so redeemed until sold again for gold."

Senator Hoar refers to the veto of the Inflation Bill as "regarded by most persons as the turning of the corner by the American people, and setting the face of the Government toward specie payment and honest money." Grant was under immense pressure, intended to make him sign the bill, and brought to bear upon him by those who sustained the measure. Badeau tells us he sat down to

write out the reasons thus presented to him, purposing to adopt the arguments and sign the bill. He found the reasoning in favor of inflation so weak, however, that he abandoned the attempt to coerce his own judgment into accord with some of his advisers, and instead vetoed the measure. The story, which is told by General Badeau in his volume entitled "Grant in Peace," and which is referred to by Senator Hoar, and vouched for by Secretary Boutwell of the Treasury,¹ illustrates a quality which in my judgment was one of Grant's most characteristic traits. He was wonderfully eager to view both sides of a question, and, like Lincoln, willing to change his opinion in accordance with what he saw; but once let him be convinced that he had done justice to his opponent's point of view, and he stood squarely by his own conviction of what he felt to be right. In 1874, with the panic of the preceding year still in mind, he said in his Message to Congress:

"I believe it is in the power of Congress at this session to devise such legislation as will renew confidence, revive the industries, start us on a career of prosperity to last many years and to save the credit of the Nation and of the people."

At this question he hammered unceasingly until, on January 14, 1875, he was able to sign the bill for the resumption of specie payment, when he sent a special message of congratulation to the Senate,—the "House in which the measure originated."

One of the most serious questions which the country had to face at the conclusion of the war was the loss of the carrying trade and the general decline of foreign com-

¹ See also, J. F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. VII, pp. 62-64.

merce. As early as 1870 Grant was recommending measures to "secure American shipping on the high seas and American ship-building at home." "The cost," he says, "of building iron vessels, the only ones that can compete with foreign ships in the carrying trade, is so much greater in the United States than in foreign countries that without assistance from the Government they cannot be successfully built over here." In later messages he returns to this theme and urges its importance upon Congress.

On no subject has Grant been more criticised — and in my judgment misunderstood — than in his relation to civil-service reform. He promptly began to impress upon Congress the necessity for abandoning the system of appointments then in force. In his annual Message for 1870 he remarks that "There is no duty which so much embarrasses the Executive and heads of Departments, nor is there any such arduous and thankless labor imposed on Senators and Representatives as that of finding places for their constituents. The present system does not secure the best men, and often not even fit men, for public place." The following year Congress gave authority to the Executive to appoint a Civil Service Commission. Grant at once convened the first Civil Service Board, and in due time promulgated the rules and regulations which it presented to him. The pressure which was brought to bear upon him by the leaders of his own party — in some instances by sincere though mistaken friends of good government — made his course inconceivably difficult. Year after year the men who profited by the spoils system blocked the President's efforts to secure from Congress an adequate appropriation for the support of the Commission, or defin-

its legislation to insure the permanency of the Commission's work. His references to the subject in 1871, 1872, and 1873 are earnest appeals in behalf of these measures. Grant is usually charged with having abandoned the fight for civil-service reform under the pressure of the party managers, and in view of the effect which his further advocacy might have upon the approaching National election. If that be so, no good work was ever sacrificed to a mean motive with such complete frankness and dignity. In 1874, in his message to Congress he makes a final plea for just and proper legislation on the subject, and in the event of such legislation again being refused, he says :

"I will regard such action as a disapproval of the system, and will abandon it, except so far as to require examination for certain appointees to determine fitness. Competitive examinations will be abandoned.

"The Gentlemen who have given their services, without compensation, as members of the board to devise rules and regulations for the government of the civil service of the country have shown much zeal and earnestness in their work, and to them, as well as to myself, it will be a source of mortification if it is to be thrown away. But I repeat that it is impossible to carry this system to a successful issue without general approval and assistance and positive law to support it."

Owing largely to Mr. Conkling's opposition to the measure, Congress failed either to make an appropriation or to legislate on the question, and on March 9, 1875, the civil service rules were abolished. Fugitive efforts were made during President Hayes's administration to reorganize the work of reform, and good results were obtained through the support of Mr. Pendleton, a Democratic Senator, but it needed the passage of several years, the assas-

sination of President Garfield by a man in some sense a product of the "spoils system," and the election of the Democratic candidate for President to induce Congress to give up the fight and re-establish the United States Civil Service Commission, with the long sought for appropriation of twenty-five thousand dollars for its support. This occurred during President Arthur's administration.

In any attempt, however imperfect, to sum up Grant's contribution to the prosperity and stability of our domestic condition during the terms of his Presidency, it would be unfair not to refer to what Senator Hoar has well named "the healing influence of Grant" as exerted in various crises between the North and the South. In spite of the instances when it became the duty of the Executive to enforce measures for the suppression of disorder and violence, — as in the Ku-Klux-Klan disturbances, for instance, — Grant's personal feeling was always in favor of generous and pacific measures toward the South. His attitude toward individual Southerners, and the affectionate esteem of many of his old enemies for himself, are symbols and evidence of the fair-dealing which marked their relations. He steered a firm course, too, during the Tilden-Hayes excitement, and whatever may be the judgment of history upon that manifestation of party strife, Grant's calmness, together with his courageous and decisive action, went far toward averting the horror and bloodshed which further dispute could so easily have occasioned. I was representing at the time the Department of the Interior on that Board, composed of representatives from all the Executive Departments, the Department of Agriculture, and the Smithsonian Institute, which had been convened to take

charge of the Government exhibits at the Centennial Exposition of 1876. I had left Philadelphia in order to learn more of the political situation in Washington and took occasion to call at the White House to see President Grant. The result of the election was not then definitely known, but on November 8, the morning of the election, Tilden was reported to have secured 184 electoral votes — it took 185 to elect — and the returns from South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana were not yet positively determined. General Sherman was also with Grant, I remember, together with other prominent men. Sherman, with his usual impetuosity, was pacing the room, lamenting with some profanity the fate of the Nation — and especially of the army — should the Democrats — otherwise the “rebels” — assume control, but Grant was perfectly calm and apparently serene. On the following morning we took a special train for Philadelphia, and in the evening Grant attended the last public banquet of the Commissioners of the Philadelphia Exposition. During the banquet the chairman arose, and knocking with his gavel to bring the assemblage to order, he announced that the President had received a telegram which necessitated his withdrawal. Grant and his Cabinet left the dining-room, and Grant then read a telegram from old Zack Chandler, Chairman of the Republican Committee, stating that there was imminent danger of violence and the destruction of the returns from counties and precincts under dispute, and urging the President to enforce order by the presence of troops. Grant at once authorized the sending of troops to Florida, where the danger was greatest. Zack Chandler afterward told me that he had discovered the Democrats were taking

his messages off the wires, and he only succeeded in getting word of the emergency safely to Grant by using Jay Gould's private line.

There can be no doubt that Grant acted in this crisis with great sagacity and perfect good faith. His immediate decision to protect the honor of the Nation, if necessary with the presence of troops, always seemed to me an admirable example of his ability to come quickly and sanely to important conclusions, and nothing could be further from the truth, as it was impressed upon me at the time, than to represent Grant as a half-deluded pawn in the hands of greedy politicians and a scheming Secretary of War.¹ Such an interpretation is hardly necessary to the understanding of the following straightforward and dignified telegram sent by Grant to Sherman as an amplification, it would seem, of his policy inaugurated the night before at Philadelphia :

“Instruct General Augur in Louisiana and General Ruger in Florida to be vigilant with the force at their command, to preserve peace and good order, and to see that the proper and legal boards of canvassers are unmolested in the performance of their duties. Should there be any grounds of suspicion of a fraudulent count on either side, it should be reported and denounced at once. No man worthy of the office of President should be willing to hold it if counted in or placed there by fraud. Either party can afford to be disappointed in the result. The country cannot afford to have the result tainted by the suspicion of illegal or false returns.”

Some of the proudest achievements of our foreign policy took place during Grant's administration, — in many cases as a direct result of his advocacy. The great talent and

¹ See John Bigelow's *Life of Tilden*, Vol. II, pp. 17-18.

enterprise of his Secretary of State were splendidly reinforced by the courage and sagacity which specially characterized Grant in all emergencies involving the possibilities of war. Nowhere did he manifest these qualities with more striking effect than in the contribution which he made to the settlement of our serious difficulties with England which culminated in the affair of the Alabama Claims. The spirit with which Grant faced this issue and forced the attention of Great Britain to our claim in this matter should be revered by every student of our history and estimated at its worth. In Grant's second annual message of December 5, 1870, appeared the following paragraph :

" The cabinet of London, so far as its views have been expressed, does not appear to be willing to concede that Her Majesty's Government was guilty of any negligence, or did or permitted any act during the war, by which the United States has just cause for complaint. Our firm and unalterable convictions are directly the reverse. I therefore recommend Congress to authorize the appointment of a commission to take proof of the amount of the ownership of these several claims, on notices to the Representative of Her Majesty at Washington, and that authority be given for the settlement of these claims by the United States, so that the Government shall have the ownership of the private claims, as well as the responsible control of all demands against Great Britain. It cannot be necessary to add that whenever Her Majesty's Government shall entertain a desire for a full and friendly adjustment of these claims the United States will enter upon their consideration with an earnest desire for a conclusion consistent with the honour and dignity of both Nations."

The effect upon England of this firmness and dignified statesmanship can scarcely be overestimated. Early in the following month Secretary Fish was informally ap-

proached upon the various questions demanding settlement by Sir John Rose, who was "unofficially" deputed to open negotiations, and by the 26th of that same month of January the members of the joint high commission set sail, — without their commissions, which were signed by the Queen early in February and despatched to them by special messenger. On February 9, 1871, Grant was able to send a special message to Congress, from which I quote the following:

"The British Minister accredited to the Government recently, in compliance with instructions from his Government, submitted the proposal for the appointment of a 'joint high commission' to be composed of members to be named by each Government to hold its sessions at Washington, and to treat and discuss the mode of settling the different questions which have risen out of the fisheries, as well as those which affect the relations of the United States toward the British possessions in North America.

"I did not deem it expedient to agree to the proposal unless the consideration of the questions growing out of the acts committed by the vessels which have given rise to the claims known as the 'Alabama Claims' were to be within the subject of discussion and settlement by the commission. The British Government having assented to this, the commission is expected shortly to meet."

The nomination of the commissioners then follows.

It is a well-known fact that when General Grant left the Presidency, the United States was absolutely free from any foreign entanglements. By 1872 we were, in Grant's own words, "for the first time in the history of the United States as a nation, without a question of disputed boundary between our territory and the possessions of Great Britain on this continent."

Senator Hoar¹ reminds us that it was under Grant's administration that nearly all the "great powers of the world" renounced by treaty the "doctrine of perpetual allegiance," thus for the first time ensuring an unblemished citizenship to our citizens of foreign birth. In addition to these two significant and positive results of a policy which was characteristic of Grant's firmness and large sense of justice, the toleration of his attitude toward Spain in the "Virginus" trouble, and his absolute refusal to permit the country to be drawn into any complication with Spain in Cuba — at a time when popular feeling in favor of intervention was very strong — attest equally and only less positively the wisdom of his foreign policy.

Upon all the important issues of which the foregoing is but a hasty and imperfect summary, Grant hammered with a persistency and assurance parallel to the unflinching determination which carried him through the war. He made perhaps fewer public utterances than any other of our Presidents who have been concerned with great National questions, but in the few official records he has left us, he let slip no opportunity to state clearly and emphatically what he believed the policy of his country should be on the problems which confronted us at that time. The reach and intricacy of those problems we are sometimes prone to forget. Secretary Boutwell in his essay on Grant declares the difficulties which confronted him to have been the greatest which had threatened any administration since 1789, save only those which had called Lincoln to the rescue of the Union.²

¹ Autobiography, Vol. I, p. 251.

² The Lawyer, the Statesman and the Soldier, George S. Boutwell, p. 160.

Against these and other services, unnoted here, performed by President Grant for the Nation, may be offset a series of criticisms which may all be comprised in the statement that Grant failed to root out the corruption which debased our public character, and that he sometimes failed to punish the offenders. It has been pointed out by nearly all — critics and apologists alike — who have written of Grant's two administrations that the corruption in high and low places had long been developing and was the all but inevitable result of the war and of the long continued ascendancy of one political party. I do not propose to enter into this controversy, the details of which can readily be found elsewhere, nor do I wish to be understood to say that Grant during the terms of his Presidency encountered no problems which his genius failed to master. He encountered many with which by temperament and experience he was unfitted to cope; nor is it underestimating the value of leadership to declare that in all probability no one man could have overthrown in eight years the combined forces of greed, hatred, and power which were rendering our National life inconceivably corrupt. But I do wish to be understood to say earnestly and unequivocally that General Grant in the capacity of President of the United States was the same wise, incorruptible, and fearless man who had led the armies of the Union to the victories that culminated at Appomattox. The worst charges that can be brought against him with any shadow of truth are that he was loyal to his friends when other men looked upon them with disfavor, and that he was unsuspecting and generous to a fault. We may not always be able to explain his friendships or his re-

serves, but once we understand the essential quality of the man himself, we shall feel that the only unthinkable explanation is one that bids us find Grant wanting in either sagacity or rectitude.

In illustration of the independence, not to say stubbornness, with which Grant held to his friends in the teeth of criticism I recall at random a conversation I once had with the President in regard to Governor Shepard of the District of Columbia. We were speaking of the important work that was being carried on under Shepard's direction in the city of Washington, and which was the initial step in beautifying the capital city. General Grant said that he had watched this work with the greatest interest from the first, and had approved the Governor's plans, feeling that the improvements were based on fundamental principles and would result in great benefit to the city. He said he was not at all unwilling to have it known that he approved of Shepard's plans, and furthermore he told me that although he did not have leisure to pay many visits he made it a point to call on Governor Shepard. He added humorously that if the maid were slow in opening the door he was not ashamed to be seen standing on the Governor's doorstep. This was at a time when Governor Shepard was perhaps the worst assailed man in Washington. The President was ready to stand for the good qualities he knew him to possess, and share with him in the opprobrium.

On the other hand I had personal and very positive proof of Grant's readiness to act swiftly and unequivocally in any case where he was sure of his ground. I remember on one occasion a man, whom I knew to be of undoubted probity, called to see me at my office in the Bureau of

Education, and told me that an appointee of President Grant's—I think the postmaster in the Western town from which my informant came—was proving himself incompetent and dishonest. This appointee was not only related to President Grant but was also a connection of the Dents, and my informant had little hope that his removal could be effected. He was considerably surprised when I volunteered to bring the matter at once to the President's attention. The result was just what I had anticipated. Grant acted immediately on my assurance that the man who had reported the facts to me was trustworthy, and Grant's relative lost his place. I have always cherished the memory of that incident because in a way it explains the basis of my relationship with the President. Apart from the little group of men whose reputations were established beyond cavil, and who never faltered in their friendship for the President, there were none too many among the office-seekers and office-holders who surrounded Grant who were uninfluenced by the gossip that circulated about him, and who believed absolutely that he would do the right thing, when convinced of its righteousness, at any cost to himself. But it took a great deal of evidence to convince him of corruption in other men. He knew by bitter personal experience just how easily a man's reputation could be torn to ribbands, and he was careful how he inflicted upon others what he endured himself. Senator Hoar speaks of this in his Autobiography, and it is an element in Grant's make-up which should never be lost sight of. He was always a great man for facts, and the circumstances of his own life made him more than ever cautious how far he permitted himself to act without them. In

order to keep the President informed upon matters not likely to come to his ears in other ways, a group of Grant's friends was in the habit of meeting occasionally for the definite purpose of talking over political affairs and reporting to Grant when expedient. It was an informal arrangement among ourselves, and the men who formed the group drifted together naturally or were chosen because of their ability to serve the end we had in mind. Judge Carter of Ohio, who nominated Abraham Lincoln for the Presidency, represented the law. He was at the time Chief Justice for the District of Columbia. The Post Office was represented by the local postmaster, J. M. Edmunds of Michigan, Zack Chandler's special friend. He was quite as familiar with the affairs of the central office as was the Postmaster-General himself. He was a man of parts in many ways. Carter once said to me, I remember, — it was on the way to Judge Edmunds's funeral, — that scarcely a man outside the Cabinet had exercised such an influence during the war as Edmunds. The Treasury was represented by a very able man and brilliant mathematician, who held the office of Actuary of the Treasury, — an office since abolished. I represented the Department of the Interior. We used to assemble at Judge Edmunds's office, sometimes once a week, sometimes once a month, according as circumstances indicated, and there we were met by some member of Grant's official family — usually Babcock — who conveyed our information to the President. Men seldom like to bring unpleasant reports to the Chief Executive, and there were times when even the Cabinet officers were reputed to hesitate in speaking upon the affairs of their own Departments. We kept Grant in touch with many things that might otherwise have

escaped him, and helped to clear up a few of the misrepresentations that were constantly being made. The President undoubtedly trusted us, and was glad of the service we rendered him.

Zack Chandler was another friend on whom Grant could always rely. On one occasion, I remember, it seemed advisable to present to the President a matter of some gravity, and Chandler, who had returned to his Michigan home after the season's law-making, was sent for. He came to Washington, and called on Grant in company with Senator Cameron. Chandler succeeded in presenting the affair to the President in a light that won his favor, and was about to withdraw, well pleased with the result of his mission, when Cameron, who, as every one knows, was a great man to seek favors for his constituents, felt that he must improve the opportunity. Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he produced a package of letters, and was about to importune the President in regard to "a little matter of which a constituent had written," when Zack Chandler, — from whom I had the story, — seizing him with scant ceremony by the arm, exclaimed, "Hold on, Cameron, we've done enough for one day," and marched him out of the room. That was characteristic of Michigan's bluff and honest Senator. If there were a hard duty to perform and men lacked the courage to do it, old "Zack" stood in the breach. It was he who, at Belknap's request, went with Secretary Belknap to that sad interview with President Grant after the committee charged with the investigation had confronted Belknap with the scandal connected with the Indian trading post. Grant himself said to me in speaking of the interview that Belknap had told him he was absolutely ignorant

that a bribe had been accepted until the committee presented the proof they had gathered. Belknap repeated to the President, however, what he was understood to have said to the committee, that he was ready to assume all the responsibility. History seems to be inclined to take him at his word, — to accept Belknap's brave sacrifice of his good name, and to record his guilt in books that will endure after the memory of the true circumstances shall have passed away; but no one who really knew of the affair at the time considered Secretary Belknap otherwise than as a man who had made a great sacrifice to protect Mrs. Belknap, the real offender, for whose action he felt himself technically if not morally responsible. That fact once accepted, the motive for his strange plea that, having resigned from office he could not be prosecuted, becomes doubly clear. Certainly no other interpretation of the facts explains why his judges failed to convict him in the face of adequate evidence of guilt. The Belknap affair, as may be imagined, had a very disturbing effect upon the President. I remember his asking me in connection with it, if I had any knowledge or suspicion of corruption in any of the other Departments, but I knew of nothing at the time except the current rumors which were known to the President as well as to the rest of us. In a somewhat long association with President Grant I never knew of a case wherein he failed to administer justice if justice lay within his power and if he felt he could trust those who brought him information.

As an illustration of the confidence which men of widely differing opinions and prejudices placed in him, I recall a little incident connected with the campaign for Grant's

second election. The campaign managers told me they wanted a document on Grant's work for the Negro, and at the same time showed me the outline of an argument in his support which had been furnished them by General Mosby, the famous Confederate raider. Mosby was one of the prominent Southern men who at the close of the war tried sincerely to reconcile themselves to the new order of things. He had become acquainted with President Grant and was much impressed with him,—so much so that he had prepared the outline of this argument intended to win Southern men to Grant's support. The paper referred, I remember, to Grant's terms to Lee, when he sent the Confederate soldiers home with their horses and accoutrements. My younger brother Charles, then a newspaper correspondent, took the matter of the campaign documents in hand, and furnished the managers with both papers in shape ready for use. The one on the Negro policy was signed by Frederick Douglass; the argument from a Southern standpoint was signed by Mosby. Here then were an ex-Confederate who had fought for the slave issue, and a Negro of the race freed by the Proclamation, signing documents supporting the same man and the same policy, within ten years after the close of the war.

CHAPTER XIX

Last interview with Grant at Mount McGregor. A written greeting.

IT would be impossible for me now to follow with any consecutiveness the course of my relations with General Grant, and so I turn in sadness and regret to the last days of his life and to the recital of my own final interview with him, setting this brief story apart and by itself as it stands in my own memory, and reserving for the following and concluding chapter a few of the many anecdotes and impressions personal to Grant, and to Lincoln, which crowd into my mind.

In the summer of 1885 I was attending an educational conference at Saratoga, only a few miles from Mount McGregor, where Grant was already installed in the cottage which friends had put at the disposal of the dying General. On Sunday morning Bishop Newman was to preach at Mount McGregor, and I joined a large company going there. I had a double purpose, — to hear my friend's sermon and to see the place where Grant was spending his last days. Arrived at the hotel on the mountain, I made inquiries and got what information I could of the General's condition. I felt some hesitation at calling in person at the cottage, but I could not reconcile myself to be so near my old commander and send him no greeting, so I wrote a word of sympathy on my card and despatched it to him by a messenger. It so happened, however, that the Gen-

eral's son, General, then Colonel, Frederick Grant, met me in the street and urged me warmly to call at the cottage, telling me that his wife, his mother, and his sister were all on the piazza and would be glad to see me. I protested my unwillingness to intrude, but the Colonel took my arm and pressed me forward. I had a very interesting though sad talk with the ladies, in which Mrs. Grant took the lead, repeating to me many of the touching incidents of the General's illness. While we were all chatting together, Mrs. Grant withdrew for a moment into the house. After she had quietly joined us again, I saw a door open which led indoors from a corner of the veranda, and through it came the General's valet with a pillow in his arm. Behind him came the General himself. His face was very pale, — what could be seen of it, for the lower part was carefully covered. As soon as he was seated, I bowed and was about to retire, thinking I ought not to stay, but with a significant motion of his hand he detained me. That characteristic gesture, — the beckoning with all the fingers of his hand as it hung loosely at his side, — so familiar to all of us who had served under Grant in the old days, seen again in the now voiceless General, was full of infinite dignity and pathos. I went up to him at once, and tried to tell him how deeply his friends and the whole public felt the suffering he was undergoing. Presently he began to write on the tablet which his valet had placed before him. I have that sad pencilled message to this day, and reproduce it here. I did not read it until after I had said good-by and left the cottage. This is what Grant had written :

“ I am very glad to see you, and wish I could have some conversation with you. I should like to have you say something about

I am very glad to see you, and wish
I could have some conversation with you.
I should like to hear see you something
about our war of, and whizzing the negroes
down about Grand Junction, Tenn. In
writing on that subject for my book
I had to rely on memory. No doubt
there will be some mistakes though they
would not be so bad as errors in the
Military part. I intended submitting
that part to you but I was so ill
while writing it, and so anxious to
get through that I did not have the
time. The first Vol. is now in
print;

FACSIMILE OF MESSAGE WRITTEN BY GENERAL U. S. GRANT
AT MOUNT MCGREGOR, A FEW DAYS
BEFORE HIS DEATH.

our use of, and utilizing the negroes down about Grand Junction, Tennessee. In writing on that subject for my book I had to rely on memory. No doubt there will be some mistakes, though they would not be so bad as errors in the military part — I intended submitting that part to you, but I was so ill while writing it, and so anxious to get through, that I did not have time. The first volume is now in print.”

Only a few days after that was written the great General was dead.

I was especially affected by that message. It was the first intimation I had had of any reference being made in Grant's "Memoirs" to the work for the freedmen. He had been engaged in writing a history of one of the greatest struggles in the story of mankind, — he was assigning to himself and his subordinate officers the places which each will undoubtedly hold in permanent history, yet he turned aside from that great record to tell briefly the incidental story of the work for and with the Negro in the Valley. It touched me deeply, too, that he should have turned to me as the representative of the work. When I came to read his book, I found that he had remembered the essentials of our enterprise and reported them with surprising accuracy and completeness.

Thus closed for me one of the most inspiring and fruitful associations of my life. The last greeting I had from him showed him the same brave, painstaking, generous, and unassuming man into whose presence I first came with such foreboding on that November day in 1862. Between those two meetings stretched the record of his life, — a mighty rebellion crushed, a mighty Nation re-established in prosperity and peace.

CHAPTER XX

Personal characteristics of Grant and Lincoln. Grant's kindness to friend and foe. His even temper. Sensitiveness to criticism. His modesty. Grant, Lincoln, and Sumner. The unassuming quality of great men. The genius of Grant and Lincoln rooted in character. Their attitude toward religion. Conclusion.

THE little stories of Grant and Lincoln which I gather together in this chapter are valuable chiefly, if at all, because they illustrate qualities which are characteristic of the two great men. The traits they illustrate are perhaps in every case only those which we are accustomed to associate with the names of Lincoln and of Grant, but I do not know that we can ever have put before us too many examples of benevolence, loyalty, and true religious feeling, even in heroes already familiar to us.

It is of Grant's well-known loyalty to his friends that I would speak first. Yet that does not express fully what I mean. It is rather his habit of treasuring loyally the memory of an association, and especially of recalling — at the moment, too, when he was able to reward it — some service rendered either to him or to the cause for which he stood. Grant was often accused of favoritism, but when the cases are looked into it is found that he gave the offices at his disposal to those whom he had tested previously in some capacity, believing that a man or woman capable of doing good service on one occasion might reasonably be

expected to succeed again. His promotions in the army were governed by a careful application of this rule, and he can hardly be blamed for following it in civil life.

I have referred in the chapter dealing with the education of the freedmen in the Mississippi Valley to the work of Mrs. Canfield, whose high character and efficiency won for her the recognition and esteem of all the officers who knew her, both as a wise and indefatigable nurse, and also as head of the Colored Orphan Asylum in Memphis. While I was in charge of the Bureau of Education at Washington, I received a letter from Mrs. Canfield, telling me that President Grant had hunted her up — she was matron of some educational institution in the West — and had written to her, offering to appoint one of her sons to the Naval Academy. She was anxious to talk with the President personally, and asked me to facilitate her in reaching him. When she arrived in Washington, I took her to Grant's office. I saw at once that she desired to speak to him privately, and held aloof that she might have the opportunity to do so. She asked him, I believe, to give her the post of librarian at Annapolis in order that she might be near her boy. This, of course, the President did not feel justified in doing, but he at once asked me if there were not some opening for her in the Bureau of Education, to which he felt she was specially adapted. On reflection I was able to put Mrs. Canfield in charge of the subject of industrial educational work in reformatories for girls. She became one of my most efficient workers, travelling widely in order to collect data which proved of great value. She did much for the industrial education of young women, and was able to furnish the necessary information for the

establishment of various philanthropic enterprises on safe and expedient lines. I owed her assistance indirectly to Grant's kind thought for her son, and directly to his quick recognition of the work in which she would be sure to prove most useful.

Another illustration of Grant's faithfulness to old associates occurs to me. In his "Memoirs"¹ the General relates how near he once came to being captured by the enemy. His position at Corinth—practically without a command—had become unbearable, and he had received permission to remove his headquarters to Memphis. On the way there, about twenty miles out from the city and in the heat of the day, the General and his small escort of cavalry passed a house at which Grant stopped and asked for a glass of water, having been attracted by the prospect of shelter from the sun, and by the sight of a "comfortable looking white-haired gentleman" who turned out to be a strong Union sympathizer. Grant tarried with this gentleman—Mr. De Loche by name—so long that the dinner-hour approached, and Mrs. De Loche asked him to remain to dinner. His host, however, was so far from urgent that the General made his excuses and rode on. A day or two later, Mr. De Loche came to Memphis and called on General Grant to explain his discourtesy. Knowing that General Jackson was in the neighborhood, he had been in the greatest concern for Grant's safety,—especially as he felt sure a neighbor of vigorous Southern feeling to whom he had been obliged to present General Grant would lose no time in reporting to Jackson the whereabouts of the Union General. Jackson in fact

¹ Vol. II, pp. 387-390.

appeared at the De Loche house shortly after Grant's departure. His horses were jaded, and he did not pursue, but had he done so, he would have found the General not far distant, resting with his party under a tree and without even their side arms easily available for defence. The details of the story are charmingly told by Grant himself, and are probably familiar to my readers; of one detail, however, he says nothing. Grant remembered Mr. De Loche's faithfulness for many years, and during his Presidency appointed him postmaster of the town in which his home was situated, the name of which, however, I do not recall.

Nor were Grant's favors confined wholly to the men and women who had sympathized with the Union cause. A few years after the war, while I was Commissioner of Education, General George Maney, formerly prominent in the Confederate army, came to see me at my office in the Bureau. He had a son whom he was very anxious to have enter West Point, and he wanted to know if there were any probability that Grant would consent to include him among the Presidential appointees. He requested me to introduce him to the President. I had come to know General Maney as a man who had seen the mistake of secession, and whose loyalty to the Union was not to be doubted. He had been an eminent lawyer in the South before the war, had had all the educational advantages of a Southern gentleman, and was in every respect a man whose sympathies the country might be proud to claim. I was very glad to go with him to the President's office. After General Maney had stated his case fully, Grant turned to me and remarked that he thought it was high time to begin to make appointments

to the old Academy from among the sons of ex-Confederates whose loyalty had become assured. I referred to my acquaintance with General Maney in Tennessee — he was a resident of Nashville — and to his devotion and zeal for the Government after the surrender. The President was always alert to discover and encourage the evidences of returning loyalty, and he agreed with much cordiality to make the recommendation. Afterwards, General Maney became distinguished in our diplomatic service.

It was told of General Grant that at Vicksburg an interview was arranged for the purpose of bringing to his notice a destitute Confederate woman who with her two children was anxious to secure a pass on one of the boats and return to her home. The friend who was acting for her brought her to Grant's headquarters, where they found the General surrounded by a number of army men and other distinguished persons. "Gentlemen," said Grant, promptly, "excuse me, I have an appointment." The woman was introduced and told her story. General Grant called an officer at its conclusion and directed that transportation be furnished her to her home, then turning to the friend, he asked if she were provided with money. "Not a penny," was the reply. The General took from his pocket a fifty-dollar bill and said, "Give her this with my compliments and best wishes."

Numerous anecdotes might be told to show how much Grant and Lincoln were alike in their kindness to those who were suffering. Lincoln was vastly more expansive in his expression of sympathy, but Grant, with perhaps no expression of feeling at all, would do the same kind act.

Like all very great men, both Lincoln and Grant had themselves so well in hand that any indication of anger

was of the rarest occurrence. I never saw Lincoln angry. Grant's calmness and self-control during battle and at all times of excitement was a constant source of amazement to his associates. Rawlins and I used often to comment upon it. Rawlins told me, on one occasion after the war, when we were chatting together in his house in Georgetown, a story of the General's reprimanding one of his soldiers who was guilty of insulting a woman, and remarked that it was the only instance in which he had seen Grant lose his temper. General Porter relates the same story in his delightful book, "Campaigning with Grant," and adds the well-known incident witnessed by himself, of the General's indignation with a teamster in the army whom he discovered brutally beating his mules. For my own part, I saw Grant angry but once, and that was at Vicksburg. I went on board a boat with him which had just returned from a trip up the Mississippi, having conveyed a number of sick soldiers to the Northern States. We had passed together from the gang-plank to the bow of the vessel when the Captain came up to report. Grant asked a few questions in regard to the distribution of ice to the wounded men, and elicited the information that the Captain had permitted the ice to be sold instead of distributing it freely to the sufferers. The General said very little, but his face was somewhat terrible; the Captain quailed under his anger, and turned away. The General was much disturbed; he told me that he had taken special pains to have the boat stocked with an extra supply of ice that there might be no unnecessary suffering. I believe there is but one story on record in which the anger which Grant so rarely showed was excited by any personal grievance,

and that is the incident of the President's display of feeling toward Senator Sumner which Senator Hoar relates with so much reverence for both these great men who so sadly and inevitably misunderstood each other.

Badeau in his volume, "Grant in Peace," tells us in connection with Grant's attitude toward Andrew Johnson that the General talked with Frelinghuysen and other senators about the impeachment, and counselled Johnson's conviction. Grant was disappointed at the outcome of the trial, writes Badeau, although later his feeling changed. Certainly a little personal antagonism toward Johnson would have been excusable on Grant's part, and in addition to this, he must have felt the President to have been an unsafe man to control the Nation's destiny. During the impeachment I was constantly in Washington, and went daily to Grant's headquarters, expressly to report the progress of the trial. I confess, well as I knew the equitableness of Grant's nature, I looked on with amazement at the even sense of justice that pervaded his mind at this time. General Rawlins made no attempt to control or disguise the honest indignation which stirred in him, but Grant was never misled into any expression of passionate or even partisan feeling.

That Grant was intensely sensitive to criticism cannot be doubted for a moment, and his suffering caused by the base and often malignant stories about himself was very acute. He felt especially, I think, the stories of his intemperance, — perhaps because of the early days of his life when such tales were not without foundation. I have already stated it to be my emphatic belief that after Grant's return to the army all the reports of his drunkenness were

wholly unjustified by the facts. Once he had found his work, I believe the vagaries of that strange period of preparation and probation never mastered him again. There was a time during his Presidency, however, when certain papers were full of gossip about his intemperance. One early evening, at the time when this excitement was at its height, I met the President in his private carriage on his way to Georgetown. The street was narrow, and I had a full view of his face, which looked somewhat discolored. He afterwards spoke to me of the attacks which were being made at the time upon his habits, and I saw how deeply the criticism and slander to which he was subjected wounded him. He referred to the day I had seen him on his way to Georgetown as a case in point. His enemies had interpreted his appearance to his discredit, while as a matter of fact he had been spending several nights at the bedside of a sick child, and was on his way to repeat the same experience. The loss of sleep was quite explanation enough for the slightly unnatural appearance of his face. There was no end to the foolish tales that were told of him. He was charged with neglecting his old comrade Rawlins when the latter was dying of consumption. I knew personally of his constant and devoted attentions to his friend, but many people chose to believe the sensational and libellous reports.

It used to be thought that Grant had no sense of humor, but as people came to know him better, this impression passed away. Certainly no one could fail to credit him with humor who has read his book, for though he had not the riotous, fun-loving quality of Lincoln's humor, his appreciation of an amusing incident was very keen. Years

after the war was over, Grant entertained me one day with an account of a young newspaper correspondent who with others of his craft appeared on the scene of action at Pittsburg Landing, and there proceeded to give Grant minute instructions as to how the battle should be conducted. The young man represented at the time a Cincinnati paper which was inclined to treat the General rather roughly, but the President assured me, with a twinkle in his eye, that he had listened to the journalist's plan with the utmost consideration, though the battle was fought in accordance with his own ideas. At the time the story was told to me, the journalist in question, besides being very prominent in his own profession, had become eminent in the field of international diplomacy; this story of his youth, however, was not in the least incredible.

In the face of the overwhelming hero worship accorded to Grant after the war and from the end of his Presidency until his death, no man, I suppose, ever appraised himself more modestly than he. One striking instance of his genuine humility occurred soon after the close of the war period. I was still in the Freedmen's Bureau, but had secured a leave of absence for a limited time to visit my New Hampshire home and take a much-needed rest. Before the term of my vacation had expired, however, General Howard summoned me back to Washington. When I reached Boston, I met Grant at the old Revere House. He had been spending some time in Maine, and on every hand had been met with tremendous enthusiasm. But instead of interpreting the excitement which his presence caused as a purely personal tribute to himself, he accepted it chiefly as a pledge of the devotion of the

people to the Union, and only incidentally as a personal triumph.

When our preparations were making for the Exhibition of 1876, I plead with Grant to permit a portrait or bust of himself to be placed on exhibition, with those of the members of his Cabinet already there. We were in the White House library at the time, and Mrs. Grant, who was with us, seconded my efforts. When I had exhausted my power of persuasion without achieving the least result, she tapped his shoulder with characteristic heartiness and good nature, saying, "You know, Ulyss', you and Lincoln and Washington stand together,—you ought to let them have something!" But Grant was adamant to even that appeal. Mrs. Grant's devotion to her husband and children was a very noticeable quality. It was told of her that on one occasion, when she was importuned to take the lead in some question of fashion, she put an end to the matter by remarking, "No, for that you must go to Mrs. ———, I am a wife and mother!" Whereby Mrs. Grant merely intended to define her own position without in the least reflecting upon the position of the brilliant wife of the Cabinet officer to whom she referred.

By speaking of General Grant's modesty, I do not mean to infer that he was without a just sense of proportion in the recognition of himself, but he was temperate and self-controlled in this as in all things. I tried to question him once as to what he considered the secret of his success in his assaults upon the enemy. "Well," said he, in his usual quiet way, "I can hardly put it in words, but I suppose it might be said that I did my best to get the enemy at a disadvantage, and then to strike as hard a blow as I could."

To my question as to where he was when he felt convinced that the tide had turned against the Confederates, he replied that it was at the battle of Champion's Hill.

I have referred to General Grant's willingness to cut red tape when occasion required, but he was extremely careful how far he permitted himself this privilege. I remember once a group of Southern men came to me with a proposition which they desired to bring to the ear of the President with a view to finding out informally how he would be impressed by it. It was well understood that I was out of politics, and for that reason, indeed, they had come to me, but the circumstances in this case were such that I could scarcely refuse to lay the matter before Grant, with the result that I was reproved by the President for the indiscretion, and informed that such matters should be presented to him in due course, and through the agency of my chief, the Secretary of the Interior. Grant was not lacking in tact, though the quality was not developed in him to the remarkable extent to which Lincoln possessed it. A case in point was the attitude of the two men toward Mr. Sumner.

On one of my visits to President Lincoln during the war, we were talking together in the most informal fashion. The President was sitting, I remember, with one leg over the arm of his reclining chair, and his long, lean body twisted into a grotesque position of comfort and relaxation. A few public men were allowed to approach Mr. Lincoln at all times and without ceremony. Senator Sumner was one of these. It may perhaps be remembered that the great Senator was in the habit of carrying a walking-stick with a handle at right angles to the stick itself. He had a

peculiar way of walking, throwing this cane vigorously forward with every step. As the President and I were chatting together, the door was suddenly opened by a messenger, and the rising end of a walking-stick appeared on the threshold. There was not the faintest doubt as to who was behind that stick. As quick as thought Mr. Lincoln had untangled himself and was upon his feet, returning with the utmost dignity the courteous bow with which Mr. Sumner greeted him. The usual salutations were exchanged. Mr. Lincoln reported the latest news from the armies, referring as he talked to the maps which were within reach on his table and on which the engineers marked the movements of special divisions of the armies as such movements occurred. Presently Mr. Sumner said, "I have thought over the matter of that consulship, and have come to say that I think —— [giving the name] is the man for the place." Mr. Lincoln thanked him heartily for his attention, and they separated with most considerate good-bys.

On the appearance of Mr. Sumner, I had discreetly retired to the other end of the room, and took a seat near the door which led into the room of the President's secretary. When the Senator had gone, Mr. Lincoln relaxed once more and returned to his chair. "Come up, Eaton," he said in his peculiar voice — which was loud — "When with the Romans, we must do as the Romans do!"

Impressed with what had occurred, I had curiosity enough to watch the papers for the notice of the appointment to that particular consulship. The man appointed was not the man Senator Sumner had suggested. For some good reason, no doubt, the President had seen fit to

make another appointment, yet he retained by his tact and cordiality the good-will and admiration of the Senator. Grant had not this *finesse*. Many years later, when Grant was President, and the trouble between him and Senator Sumner over the policy of acquiring Santo Domingo had become a sharp conflict, I took the liberty of repeating to President Grant this story of the relations of Sumner and Lincoln, suggesting that similar treatment of Mr. Sumner on his part might have been followed by an equally friendly and fortunate relationship. But what with Mr. Lincoln was pure tact and consideration of others, would have become double-dealing had it found place at all in Grant's far less subtle nature.

The tactfulness of Lincoln certainly sprang from no lack of courage, moral or physical, though we are apt to forget Lincoln's physical bravery in our reverence for the splendid daring of heart and brain which so largely made him what he was. Among the stories of him, however, which were current at the time of the war, and which I do not remember to have seen in print, is one which tells of his eagerness in exposing himself on the defences of the Capitol when the rebels appeared about the hills of Washington. The President's enthusiasm then was such that he had to be ordered to a place of safety in the rear.

Grant and Lincoln were alike in the unassuming qualities of their greatness, — a trait which seems to be characteristic of most really great men. In America it sometimes takes the guise of perhaps too little respect for the formalities attaching to a high office, but on the whole it springs from an unconscious recognition of essentials which we shall do well to cherish. A story occurs to me which,

as an illustration of the foregoing remark, should not be taken too seriously.

I once had occasion to escort a French painter of some celebrity through the War Department in Washington. He had been commissioned by Napoleon to find a subject for an American historical painting to be placed, I believe, in the Opera House in Paris. Incidentally he was examining the methods of teaching drawing in the American schools. The subject had scarcely been introduced at all in our schools at that time, and was only taught with any efficiency at Annapolis and West Point. To West Point the French artist — whose name I think was Delamarque — was especially anxious to go, and I had taken him to the War Department in order to facilitate matters for him. I had presented him to the Secretary of War and secured letters for him to the authorities at West Point, when, just as we were about to leave the building, we discovered that it was raining so hard that we drew back to wait for the shower to pass. It occurred to me that General Sherman's office was just at our right, and without forewarning my guest, I threw open the swinging door and we went in. It was a cruelly hot day, and General Sherman was seated at his desk in his shirt-sleeves as hard at work as any of his clerks. He recognized me over his shoulder and called out in his hearty way, "How are you, Eaton?" I responded, and at once presented M. Delamarque. The Frenchman's amazement on hearing Sherman's name got the better of his breeding, for he threw up both hands and exclaimed quite frankly — and in English — "Oh, my God!" When the rain abated we went on our way, the Frenchman discoursing volubly on the astounding simplic-

ity and lack of ceremony which he had found in our great men, — among whom President Grant and General Sherman had especially impressed him, for even the shirt-sleeves had not disguised from him Sherman's native forcefulness and grace.

In my association with Lincoln and with Grant, I think what impressed me most was the fact that their greatness rested in both cases upon the simple and fundamental elements of character. Both were essentially sane in morals and in intellect. Both were normal men first and great men afterwards. They met as adequately the demands of their private, personal relationships as they did the exactions of the great National issues with which the genius of each contended. They were the same magnanimous, self-sacrificing, noble, and tender-hearted men wherever and by whomsoever they were met. One of the most remarkable traits which they had in common was their open-mindedness. Grant occasionally manifested the stubbornness which was part of his equipment as a soldier in ways which were criticised at the time, but my own personal experience with him and with Mr. Lincoln led me to feel that they had unusually "willing" minds, — willing in the sense of their readiness to revise their point of view, to accept new evidence, to turn back and undo, if necessary, so the truth should better be served. This quality involved in both an almost absolute freedom from personal pique.

What might be called the spiritual inheritance of both men came to them undoubtedly from their mothers. To the best of my knowledge both men had very sincere and devout religious feeling, which was inculcated and developed by their mothers' training and example. To any one who

saw much of Lincoln there could be no doubt of this. Whatever may have been his religious experiences in early manhood, his faith in later years, when once re-established, was more the faith of an Old Testament prophet than an American of the nineteenth century. Of this, the earnestness and solemnity of his own utterances leave us under no possible misapprehension. In the conversations I had with Mr. Lincoln I was deeply impressed by the profundity of his religious feeling, his belief in the efficacy of prayer, and his desire to be in accord with the Providential plan.

With Grant, I believe the feeling was no less profound, though his manifestation of it was characteristically reserved. Nor do I think his religious convictions implanted in childhood by his mother were ever seriously interrupted by such a period of doubt and uncertainty as Mr. Coffin describes in connection with Lincoln in his "Life of Abraham Lincoln." If they were, Grant took no man into his confidence and left no record to speak for him. In conversation with him once not long after the war, when we were talking somewhat freely of religious questions, I repeated to Grant the speculations I had chanced to hear in regard to his attitude toward religion. Grant remarked that the pursuit of war was not favorable to an observance of religious practices, but that as President of the United States—it was soon after his election—he certainly expected to establish a church relationship. There was no impulsiveness such as characterised Lincoln in Grant's confession of faith, but there was nevertheless a deep and abiding religious feeling in the man which sometimes expressed itself in a calm and reasonable statement characteristic of himself.

The loyalty which in both men was such a marked trait,

was nowhere better exemplified than in their relationship toward one another. Their confidence in each other was, I think, unlimited. At a time when appalling ignorance and misapprehension prevailed in regard to the facts which underlay the great questions of the period, these two men saw eye to eye, and recognized the essential elements in the issues that were presented. Neither the South understood the North, nor the North the South; no one certainly, in those early days, understood the Negro, but so far as it was given to any one to foresee and comprehend the mighty events and emotions which wracked our National life and threatened its very existence, such foresight and comprehension were bestowed on Lincoln and on Grant.

In the face of the new perils which beset us, and bearing in mind the principles for which Grant struggled and Lincoln sacrificed his life, I can find no better appeal to the generations to whom our National character must be intrusted than that noble plea which closes Grant's first inaugural address. With it I shall end this record. It is as timely now as it was then, for it is an enduring ideal of good citizenship voiced by a man who unconsciously to himself had met the demands of his own standard:

"In conclusion I ask patient forbearance one toward another throughout the land, and a determined effort on the part of every citizen to do his share toward cementing a happy union; and I ask the prayers of the nation to Almighty God in behalf of this consummation."

APPENDIX

The following publications were issued between 1870 and 1886 by the Bureau of Education under the administration of General John Eaton.

I. — ANNUAL REPORTS

Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1870. Washington, 1870 ¹	
Same for 1871	" 1872 ¹
" " 1872	" 1873 ¹
" " 1873	" 1874 ¹
" " 1874	" 1875 ¹
" " 1875	" 1876 ¹
" " 1876	" 1878 ¹
" " 1877	" 1879 ¹
" " 1878	" 1880 ¹
" " 1879	" 1881 ¹
" " 1880	" 1882 ¹
" " 1881	" 1883 ¹
" " 1882-83	" 1884 ¹
" " 1883-84	" 1885 ¹
" " 1884-85 Eaton-Dawson	" 1886 ¹

II. — SPECIAL REPORTS

- Contributions to the annals of medical progress and medical education in the United States before and during the War of Independence. By Joseph M. Toner. Washington, 1874.
- Historical sketch of Mount Holyoke Seminary. By Mary O. Nutting. Edited by F. B. Hough. Washington, 1876.
- Historical sketch of Union College. By F. B. Hough. Washington, 1876.

¹ Out of print.

- Public Libraries in the United States of America: their history, condition, and management. Edited by S. R. Warren and S. N. Clark. Part II. Rules for a printed dictionary catalogue. By C. A. Cutter. Washington, 1876.
- Contributions to the history of medical education and medical institutions in the United States of America, 1776-1876. By N. S. Davis. Washington, 1877.
- Sketch of the Philadelphia Normal School for Girls. Washington, 1882.
- Historical sketches of the universities and colleges of the United States. Edited by F. B. Hough.¹ (History of the University of Missouri.) Washington, 1883.
- Industrial Education in the United States. Washington, 1883.
- Art and Industry. Industrial and high art education in the United States. By I. Edwardes Clarke. Part I. Drawing in the public schools. Washington, 1885.
- Outlines for a museum of anatomy. By R. W. Shufeldt. Washington, 1885.
- Educational exhibits and conventions at the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884-85. Washington, 1886.
- Contents. — Part I. Catalogue of Exhibits.
 Part II. Proceedings of the International Congress of Educators.
 Part III. Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, and Addresses delivered on Education Days. N. O. 1885.
- Indian Education and civilization. Prepared in answer to Senate resolution of February, 1885, by Alice C. Fletcher, under the direction of the Commissioner of Education. (Senate Ex. Doc. No. 95, Forty-eighth Congress, 2d Session.)

III. — CIRCULARS OF INFORMATION

- Illiteracy, derived from census tables of 1860; Educational statistics, translation of article by Dr. A. Ficker; Virchow on schoolroom diseases; Education of French and Prussian conscripts; School organization, etc., August, 1870.²

¹ This series of proposed sketches was not completed.

² Out of print.

- Public instruction in Sweden and Norway; 'The "folkehoiskoler" of Denmark. By C. C. Andrews. July, 1871.¹
- Methods of school discipline. By Hiram Orcutt. November, 1871.¹
- Compulsory education. By L. Van Bokkelen. December, 1871.¹
- German and other foreign universities. By Herman Jacobson. January, 1872.
- Public instruction in Greece, the Argentine Republic, Chili, and Equador; Statistics respecting Portugal and Japan; Technical education in Italy. By John M. Francis, George John Ryan, F. M. Tanaka. February, 1872.¹
- Vital statistics of college graduates; Distribution of college students in 1870-71; Vital statistics in the United States with diagrams. By Charles Warren. March, 1872.¹
- Relation of education to labor. By R. J. Hinton. April, 1872.¹
- Education in the British West Indies. By Thomas H. Pearne. June, 1872.¹
- The Kindergarten. By Baroness Marenholtz-Bülów, tr. by Elizabeth P. Peabody. July, 1872.¹
- American Education at the Vienna Exposition of 1873. November, 1872.¹
- Historical summary and reports on the systems of public instruction in Spain, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Portugal. (1) 1873.¹
- Schools in British India. By Joseph Warren. (2) 1873.
- College commencements for the summer of 1873 in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. (3) 1873.¹
- List of publications by members of certain college faculties and learned societies in the United States, 1867-1872. (4) 1873.¹
- College commencements during 1873 in the Western and Southern States. (5) 1873.
- Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, Washington, D. C., 1874. (1) 1874.¹
- Drawing in public schools; present relation of art to education in the United States. By Isaac Edwardes Clarke. (2) 1874.¹
- History of secondary instruction in Germany. By Herman Jacobson. (3) 1874.¹
- Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association. Washington, D. C., 1875. (1) 1875.¹
- Education in Japan. By William E. Griffis. (2) 1875.¹

¹ Out of print.

Public instruction in Belgium, Russia, Turkey, Servia, and Egypt.

By Emile de Laveye, M. de Salve, V. E. Dor. (3) 1875.¹

Waste of labor in the work of education. By Paul A. Chadburne.
(4) 1875.¹

Educational Exhibit at the International Centennial Exhibition, 1876.
(5) 1875.

Reformatory, charitable, and industrial schools for the young. By
Julia A. Holmes and S. A. Martha Canfield. (6) 1875.¹

Constitutional provisions in regard to education in the several States.
By Franklin Hough. (7) 1875.¹

Schedule for the preparation of students' work for the Centennial
Exhibition. By A. J. Rickoff, J. L. Pickard, James H. Smart
(committee). (8) 1875.

Education in China. By W. A. P. Martin. (1) 1877.¹

Public instruction in Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Würtem-
burg, and Portugal; the University of Leipzig. By Felix Heikel,
C. H. Pluggé, and J. L. Corning. (2) 1877.¹

Training of teachers in Germany. (1) 1878.¹

Elementary education in London, with address by Sir Charles Reed.
(2) 1878.

Training schools for nurses. By S. A. Martha Canfield. (1) 1879.¹

Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National
Educators' Association, 1877 and 1879, Washington, D. C.; Pro-
ceedings of the conference of college presidents and delegates,
Columbus, Ohio, December, 1877. (2) 1879.¹

Value of common school education to common labor. (Reprinted
from Annual Report of 1872.) (3) 1879.¹

Training schools for cookery. By S. A. Martha Canfield. (4) 1879.¹

American education as described by the French commission to the
International Centennial Exhibition of 1876. By Ferdinand Buis-
son and others. (5) 1879.¹

College libraries as aids to instruction. By Justin Winsor and Otis
H. Robinson. (1) 1880.¹

Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National
Educational Association, Washington, D. C., 1880. (2) 1880.

Legal rights of children. By S. M. Wilcox. (3) 1880.¹

Rural school architecture. By T. M. Clark. (4) 1880.¹

English rural schools. By Henry W. Hulbert. (5) 1880.¹

Instruction in chemistry and physics in the United States. By F. W.
Clark. (6) 1880.¹

¹ Out of print.

- The spelling reform. By Francis A. March. (7) 1880.¹
- Construction of library buildings. By Wm. F. Poole. (1) 1881.
- Relation of education to industry and technical training in American schools. By E. E. White. (2) 1881.¹
- Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, New York, 1881. (3) 1881.
- Education in France. (4) 1881.
- Causes of deafness among school children, and the instruction of children with impaired hearing. By Samuel Sexton. (5) 1881.¹
- Effects of student life on the eyesight. By A. W. Calhoun. (6) 1881.¹
- Inception, organization, and management of training schools for nurses. By S. A. Martha Canfield. (1) 1881.¹
- Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, Washington, 1882. (2) 1882.¹
- University of Bonn. By Edmond Dreyfus-Brisac. (3) 1882.¹
- Industrial art in schools. By Charles G. Leland. (4) 1882.¹
- Maternal Schools in France. (5) 1882.¹
- Legal provisions respecting the examination and licensing of teachers. (1) 1883.¹
- Coeducation of the sexes in the public schools of the United States. (2) 1883.
- Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, Washington, D. C. 1883. (3) 1883.¹
- Recent School-law decisions. By Lyndon A. Smith. (4) 1883.¹
- Meeting of the International Prison Congress at Rome. (1) 1884.¹
- The teaching, practice, and literature of shorthand. By Julius E. Rockwell. (2) 1884.¹
- Illiteracy in the United States. With appendix on national aid to education. By Charles Warren and J. L. M. Curry. (3) 1884.¹
- Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, Washington, D. C., 1884. (4) 1884.¹
- Suggestions respecting the educational exhibit at the New Orleans Exposition, 1884-1885. (5) 1884.¹
- Rural schools. Progress in the past; means of improvement in the future. By Annie Tolman Smith. (6) 1884.¹
- Aims and methods of the teacher of physics. By Charles K. Wead. (7) 1884.
- City school systems of the United States. By John D. Philbrick. (1) 1885.¹

Teachers' Institutes. By James H. Smart. (2) 1885.¹

Review of the reports of the British royal commissioner on technical instruction, with notes. By Charles O. Thompson. (3) 1885.

Education in Japan. (4) 1885.¹

Physical training in American colleges and universities. By Edward Mussey Hartwell. (5) 1885.¹

Study of music in public schools. By Charles Warren. (1) 1886.¹

Proceedings of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, Washington, D. C., 1886. (2) 1886.¹

¹ Out of print.

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